

THE MAJOR GERMAN OFFENSIVE (16-20 February)

The capture of the Factory, Carroceto, and Buonriposo Ridge to the west provided the Germans with the key positions from which they could launch their all-out attack on the Anzio beachhead. The network of roads leading south and southeast offered the opportunity for the employment of tanks; no natural obstacles would impede the advance. Once the enemy crossed the three miles of open country lying between the Factory area and the final beachhead defense line, he could employ his favorite tactics of infiltration; the tangled underbrush and scrub forest of the Padiglione Woods stretched southward from the final beachhead line almost to Anzio. Allied air reconnaissance disclosed to VI Corps the regrouping of enemy forces, the forward movement of field artillery, and the movement of heavy traffic on the railroads and roads leading from the area of Rome to the beachhead. The Allied command assumed that as soon as the Germans had completed the regrouping of their forces they would attack down the Albano road, and at the same time launch diversionary attacks along the whole Anzio front.

Preparing for the Attack

Fourteenth Army issued its preliminary order for the major German offensive on 9 February. The main effort was to be made along a 4-mile front astride the Anzio-Albano road, from Buonriposo

Ridge on the west to Spaccasassi Creek on the east. After piercing the main beachhead defense line, the Germans planned to drive through to Anzio and Nettuno, splitting VI Corps and destroying its separated parts. The assault was to be commanded by *I Parachute Corps* to the west of the Anzio road, and by *LXXVI Panzer Corps* to the east. (Map No. 15.) The first wave of the assault was to include six divisions—the *4th Parachute* (elements only) and *65th Infantry Divisions* under *I Parachute Corps*, and the *3d Panzer Grenadier*, *114th Light Infantry*, *715th Infantry*, and *Hermann Goering Panzer* (elements only) *Divisions* under *LXXVI Panzer Corps*—supported by a variety of miscellaneous units. The *26th Panzer* and *29th Panzer Grenadier Divisions*, and two battalions of Panther and Tiger tanks, were to be held in reserve, and thrown into the battle as soon as the first assault wave had pierced the main Allied defenses. This was a formidable force. *Fourteenth Army* on 12 February had at least 120,000 troops—including 70,000 combat troops—under its command. Although this number included forces guarding Rome and the coastal sector north of Anzio, the great bulk of the enemy troops were massed around the Anzio beachhead perimeter. The preliminary order of 9 February provided that the attack should be launched at H Hour on 15 February; subsequently (13 February), the time was fixed at 0630, 16 February. Essentially, the enemy tactical scheme was to break



OSTERIACCIA

CAMPOLEONE
STATION

CAMPOLEONE - CISTERNA
RAILROAD

RAILROAD BED

BUONIPORSO
RIDGE

MOLETTA RIVER

"THE CAVES
AREA"

HIGHWAY AND RAILROAD

TO SINZIO

DEAD END ROAD

FIRST
OVERPASS

LATERAL ROAD

FACTORY

CARROCEO
OVERPASS

CARROCEO CREEK

FICOCCEA
CREEK

"THE BOWLING ALLEY"

SPICASSA
CREEK

PADIGLIONE

the main Allied defense line by massed infantry attacks backed by tanks, and then to follow through with the armored reserve.

The enemy planned to hold the remainder of the beachhead perimeter with the bare minimum of forces during its all-out assault along the Albano road. To deceive the Allies, the Germans assembled their armored reserve behind Cisterna on the U.S. 3d Division front, and planned to move it at the latest possible moment to the rear of the initial assault forces. Actually, by 12 February, the Germans realized that VI Corps was well informed (through aerial observation) about German movements and intentions; they also concluded that the Allies had given up any immediate intention of returning to the offensive themselves, and that they were concentrating on digging in to prepare for the German drive.

General Mackensen seems to have entertained some doubt about the ability of his *Fourteenth Army* to push through to the sea and eliminate the Anzio beachhead, but the German High Command appears to have viewed the prospect with optimism. Hitler gave his personal approval to the plan of attack on 11 February. For success, the Germans counted on their superiority in numbers and in some forms of equipment. They had a greater number of heavy artillery weapons than VI Corps, and a more adequate supply of ammunition than they possessed on other fronts at this time. But the enemy did not underestimate the Allies' capacity to resist their assault. VI Corps had superior air support, and its artillery could be supplemented by naval gunfire. Despite Allied logistical difficulties, the Germans realized that VI Corps' ammunition supply, and therefore its artillery fire, would be superior to any which they could themselves deliver in support of their massed infantry attack. Enemy intelligence noted that, while Allied units, especially the British 1 Division and U.S. 3d Division, had suffered heavy losses, the morale of VI Corps

was good and the Allies could be expected to defend their positions stubbornly.

General Clark for some time had been aware of the necessity of reinforcing VI Corps if it was to hold the beachhead, and also maintain sufficient reserves to resume the offensive as soon as the force of the enemy counterattacks had been spent. As fast as shipping space could be made available, troops and equipment were rushed to Anzio. By clever use of camouflage the illusion was created that the British 56 Division was moving into a rest area behind the southern front. Actually it was on its way to the beachhead. The 168 Brigade had arrived on 3 February and had been committed to support the 1 Division. The remainder of the division landed over a period of several days, with the 167 Brigade coming in on 13 February and the 169 Brigade on 18 February.

The arrival of the 167 Brigade permitted VI Corps to complete the relief of the 1 Division, which then passed into Corps reserve. On the night of 14 February the 167 Brigade took over the short sector of the Moletta River line held by the 3d Battalion, 157th Infantry. The following night, on the eve of the German attack, the sector held by the 1 Division was divided between the 56 and the 45th Divisions. The left position was taken over by the 56 Division, giving it a unified front extending from the positions of the 36th Engineers along the Moletta River to the point of contact with the 45th Division west of the Albano road. All three battalions of the 167 Brigade were committed: the 9 Royal Fusiliers on the left, the 8 Royal Fusiliers in the center, and the 7 Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry (7 Oxford Bucks) on the right. Two companies of Royal Engineers, fighting as infantry, were employed to bolster the line, and the 46 Royal Tanks and 1 Division artillery were left in support. The right portion of the former 1 Division sector was taken over by the 157th Infantry under Col. John H. Church. The 179th Infantry

THE ALBANO ROAD SECTOR is shown in its entirety by this photo-mosaic compiled in February 1944. Approximate scale: 1:50,000.

held the center, and the 180th Infantry the right flank of the 45th Division line. When the Germans attacked on the morning of 16 February General Lucas had reasonably fresh troops holding the whole of the critical portion of the beachhead defense line lying astride the Albano road.

Corps artillery was strengthened by the arrival of the 977th Field Artillery Battalion, and antiaircraft units were built up steadily to aid in combatting the enemy's raids on the harbor area. In air and medium and light artillery power VI Corps far surpassed the enemy. There were 432 artillery pieces on the Corps front, not including the weapons of the infantry cannon companies. The enemy had 452 guns available to support his attack, but his ammunition supply was far inferior to that of VI Corps. Even with limitations imposed on some types of ammunition, Allied artillery by 14 February was firing about 20,000 rounds per day, and Allied destroyers and cruisers thickened the artillery fire almost daily. The enemy artillery fire falling in the harbor and beachhead areas was estimated by the VI Corps fire control center at not more than 1,500 rounds daily before 16 February.

VI Corps took advantage of a period of good weather, 12-16 February, to request as much air support as possible against the enemy's heavy-caliber guns. Locating and knocking out the guns was a difficult task. The enemy was adept at camouflaging his positions; the railroad guns in particular were moved frequently. On 13 February P-40's scored hits at the entrance to the railroad tunnel near Lake Albano and on a bridge along the railroad from Campoleone to Rome. The next day two railroad guns near the bombed bridge were attacked by P-40's and shelled by VI Corps artillery, adjusted by P-51 observers. This was one of the more successful aerial attacks on enemy railroad guns, for one gun car was derailed and the other destroyed. Other bombers concentrated on the Rome railway yards, on traffic moving south from Rome, and on assembly areas near the beachhead.

The Germans also increased the tempo of their air effort and their artillery fire on the eve of the big attack. On 15 February there were eight air

raids in the Anzio area; an LCT loaded with gasoline went up in flames and a Liberty ship was damaged. Heavy caliber shells whistled over the front lines toward the harbor where they threw up geysers of water or crashed into buildings, continuing the work of destroying the summer hotels and palatial villas along the water's edge. Defending anti-aircraft guns filled the sky with high altitude 90-mm. shells and with a crisscross pattern of 40-mm. red tracer shells which shot up like balls of light from dozens of Roman candles.

During the night of 15-16 February, Allied troops in the forward beachhead defense lines listened for the sounds of field artillery and *nebelwerfer* fire which would warn them of the expected attack. Few shells came in and patrols and outposts reported little activity along the front. The relief of the 1 Division was completed without incident. Before dawn there was no visible evidence of the impending attack, but the very silence was ominous.

The First Day, 16 February

On the morning of 16 February, at 0600, enemy guns opened up along the central beachhead front. For half an hour the forward areas were alive with bursting shells and a pall of smoke gradually spread over the battlefield. Partly concealed by the smoke, assault waves of gray-green uniformed troops swept forward to strike at points along the outpost line of the beachhead defenses.

The brunt of the enemy attack was borne by the U.S. 45th Division, which held a 6-mile sector of the front that coincided almost exactly with that upon which the Germans had determined to concentrate their assault. At approximately 0630 the troops of the *3d Panzer Grenadier* and *715th Infantry Divisions*, supported by tanks, pushed forward against the 157th Infantry and the 179th Infantry holding the left and center of the 45th Division front. (Map No. 15.)

The tactical importance of holding the Factory and the overpass at Carroceto became immediately apparent from the attacks launched against the 2d and 3d Battalions, 179th Infantry, located to the



BOMBARDMENT OF THE ANZIO AND NETTUNO AREAS *was stepped up as the enemy prepared for his big offensive. An air strike destroyed this Liberty ship (above) in Anzio harbor. Long-range shelling of Nettuno (below) continued the reduction of buildings along the water's edge.*



south and southeast of the Factory, and against the 2d Battalion, 157th Infantry, astride the Albano road. From the Factory buildings the enemy could easily observe the positions of the 179th Infantry, and both the Factory and Carroceto provided concealed assembly areas for enemy infantry and tanks. Taking advantage of the network of roads in the area, groups of from four to eight tanks would issue forth from the Factory to pour fire at point-blank range into the fox holes of American troops. When out of ammunition they would withdraw to the Factory, replenish their supply, and return to the attack. Enemy infantry, coordinating their movements with the tanks, worked down La Ficoccia Creek against the 3d Battalion, 179th Infantry, and down Carroceto Creek against the 2d Battalion.

During the morning all attacks on the 179th Infantry were beaten off with heavy losses to the enemy. 1st Lt. Donald E. Knowlton, observer for the 160th Field Artillery Battalion, had set up his radio in an oven next to a farmhouse southeast of the Factory. When the infantry outposts were forced back by enemy tanks and infantry attacking from the Factory, he refused to withdraw. While continuing to adjust the artillery fire he killed two of the enemy and possibly a third with his carbine before a slug from a machine pistol struck him in the head. Left for dead by his men he was captured by the enemy and then recaptured when the fire he had called down on his position forced the enemy to withdraw. The enemy seemed to pay no attention to casualties. As fast as one wave of the attackers was broken it was replaced by another. Companies F and G along the gully of Carroceto Creek were forced to pull back slightly and a platoon of Company L was sent forward to assist Company I in fighting its way out of an enemy encirclement. Company F, gathering together the remnants of its scattered force, reported that it was down to thirty men and that it had lost all its machine guns. Late in the afternoon the pressure on the 179th Infantry eased; the troops were given an opportunity to reorganize, and many of the men reported missing filtered back to their units.

One enemy unit, the *309th Panzer Grenadier Regiment* (also called *Infantry Lehr Regiment*), fell back in disorder, and without permission, from the 179th Infantry sector in the afternoon of 16 February. This was an infantry demonstration regiment that had been rushed from Germany, and attached on the eve of the attack to the *3d Panzer Grenadier Division*. Allied artillery fire produced heavy casualties among the troops of this regiment; after having lost a high percentage of their officers, the troops broke and fled. This incident helped to ease the pressure on the 179th Infantry and to rob the German assault of its momentum.

Enemy tanks, as well as infantry, suffered heavy losses during these attacks. At noon, the 160th Field Artillery Battalion massed the fire of 144 guns on a concentration of infantry near the Factory; at 1545, firing with observation by the 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion, it knocked out three tanks in the same area; and at 1725 it set fire to four tanks and damaged another near a water tower northeast of the Factory. When the attack started, Sgt. Charles W. Keyser, in charge of three tanks of Company A, 191st Tank Battalion, was located behind a farmhouse 600 yards from the Factory. His No. 2 tank was knocked out in the morning by an artillery shell. At noon, enemy infantry worked down the ditch beside the road to the farmhouse. Turning the turret of his No. 1 tank he fired a 75-mm. shell which grazed the house and exploded in the midst of the enemy. A second attempt to take the house was broken up with hand grenades. Two enemy tanks approached down the road. Concealed by the cloud of dust around the house Sergeant Keyser moved his No. 1 tank out, knocked out one enemy tank with three rounds, and with four rounds set the other on fire. Well-placed shells disposed of the crews as they attempted to escape. At 1430 No. 3 tank received a direct hit. Sergeant Keyser's radio, which he had been using to direct artillery fire, was damaged and he failed to receive the order from his platoon leader, 1st Lt. William E. Nangle, to withdraw. At 1615 six more enemy tanks appeared. Laying his own smoke screen the sergeant tried to make a run for it across



DUGOUTS ALONG THE MUSSOLINI CANAL had been fairly well prepared in every defilade. From positions such as these the 1st Special Service Force was able to stem enemy attempts to breach the right flank.

country. Three hundred yards from the house his tank was hit and his driver killed. Badly burned, Sergeant Keyser hid in a ditch until after dark when he got back to his battalion. Altogether, for the loss of seven tanks, the 191st Tank Battalion destroyed fifteen of the enemy's. Seven others were knocked out by antitank guns.

The artillery fire preceding the enemy attacks reached its greatest intensity along the front of the 2d Battalion, 157th Infantry, astride the Albano

road. At 0730 the fire lifted and enemy infantry and tanks struck the left flank of Company E, along the railroad, and Company G, which was in contact with the 167 Brigade in the rough country west of the Albano road. Four tanks supporting the enemy infantry attacking Company G were knocked out by artillery fire and, with the exception of the 3d Platoon which was nearly wiped out, the company beat off every attempt to infiltrate its positions. Along the highway and railroad three

enemy tanks and infantry broke through Company E's left platoon. One of the company's supporting tank destroyers was knocked out immediately; the other destroyed two of the enemy tanks and forced the third to retreat. Then it stopped the enemy infantry with its .50-caliber machine guns. All morning the company held. In the afternoon a squad of the right platoon was wiped out by tanks which destroyed the two supporting antitank guns and then moved directly into the platoon's positions. The enemy failed to press his advantage and the fighting died away toward evening.

Lighter blows fell upon the 180th Infantry, holding the right flank of the 45th Division front along the Carano road. A force of approximately two companies, following the numerous stream beds and ditches which drain to the south, attempted to infiltrate between Companies E and F. The regiment called for prearranged artillery defensive fires, and the artillery together with the machine guns of the forward companies mowed down the attacking troops. At nightfall, when the remnants of the two enemy companies were pulled back, they appeared to be completely disorganized. No deep penetrations had been made anywhere along the 45th Division front.

At the same time that the main enemy assault was directed against the 45th Division, diversionary attacks were launched against the 3d and 56 Divisions, holding the right and left flanks of the central beachhead defense line. In the 3d Division sector the enemy attacked at no less than six different points with forces ranging from single platoons to two companies. The principal attack came from the northwest of Ponte Rotto between the 2d Battalion, 7th Infantry, and the 3d Battalion, 30th Infantry. The first assault was launched by the *Parachute Demonstration Battalion*, attached to the *Hermann Goering Panzer Division*, supported by nine Mark IV tanks. The men in the two companies of the *Parachute Demonstration Battalion* were virtually all killed or captured; prisoners reported that men sick with dysentery had been forced into line for the attack. Accurate artillery fire drove back this first assault force in a state of disorder

bordering on panic. *Combat Group Berger*, in command of the attack, then committed its second wave, the *Hermann Goering Reconnaissance Battalion*. At one point the enemy penetrated 300 yards between Company K, 30th Infantry, and Company E, 7th Infantry. Company K was fighting from its command post when, at 1145, it called for an emergency barrage. The advance was stopped. The enemy kept up the pressure until midafternoon when heavy losses forced him to call a halt. The 751st Tank Battalion had knocked out five enemy tanks and a half-track; artillery and mortar fire accounted for scores of the infantry. By evening a counterattack had restored the 30th Infantry's original line.

Platoon- and company-strength attacks launched against the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion on the 3d Division left flank were also repulsed without difficulty. On the division right flank the 504th Parachute Infantry was attacked by two companies which worked their way down Cisterna Creek from the north and another company which attacked from the southeast against the Mussolini Canal. The latter force was tied in with enemy units attacking the left flank of the 1st Special Service Force at the bridges near the junction of the west branch with the main Mussolini Canal. Although two outposts beyond the canal were wiped out, the enemy failed to cross the canal or to penetrate any part of the line, and again his losses were heavy. Company C, 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion, supporting the 1st Special Service Force, assisted the artillery in knocking out three tanks and a self-propelled gun. In front of Company D, 504th Parachute Infantry, losses were so heavy that in the afternoon the enemy requested an armistice to remove his casualties. An observer in Company D counted thirty-eight dead and estimated there were at least as many wounded.

On the 56 Division front the enemy's initial attacks had more success. The *3d Battalion, 12th (Sturm) Regiment*, attacked across the Moletta River against the 9 and 8 Royal Fusiliers. The enemy then shifted his emphasis farther to the east, striking from Buonriposo Ridge with ele-

ments of the *10th Parachute Regiment*. Two companies penetrated all the way to the lateral road along the final beachhead line before they were mopped up by tanks of the 46 Royal Tanks and the penetration checked by local counterattacks of the 8 Royal Fusiliers. The forward companies of the 8 Royal Fusiliers and the 7 Oxford Bucks were overrun, leaving the enemy holding a wedge in the center of the 167 Brigade line. No effort was made to exploit the penetration, and the 56 Division was given time to move up a composite battalion of the 168 Brigade for a counterattack. By noon it was apparent that the attack on the 56 Division was intended to do no more than support the major offensive down the Albano road.

In addition to laying down preparatory fire for the infantry attacks, enemy artillery on 16 February delivered the heaviest counterbattery fire yet experienced at the beachhead. In the early morning hours the fire was concentrated on the 45th Division artillery; then it shifted to the positions of the Corps artillery. At the same time a concerted effort was made to keep the highly respected cub observation planes on the ground. German pursuit planes added to their task of strafing Allied installations and forward troops the role of pursuing the vulnerable cubs. At 1000 the 3d Division reported that its observation plane had been shot down and that fighter protection was needed. VI Corps could guarantee no immediate aid. Enemy artillery had ranged in on the Nettuno air strip and destroyed four Spitfires as they were about to take off. The field had to be abandoned for use even during the daylight hours, and all fighter protection provided from fields in the Naples area.

Enemy planes and long-range guns concentrated on preventing supplies from entering the port. On 16 February the enemy air effort reached its peak with 19 missions and approximately 172 sorties. The results achieved were not commensurate with the effort expended. An ammunition dump north of Anzio was hit, but otherwise damage was slight. In contrast, XII Air Support Command reported 34 missions and 468 sorties flown in support of VI Corps. The main air effort, which had been planned

for the Cassino front, was shifted on short notice to the beachhead. From late morning to dark, wave after wave of fighter-bombers, light bombers, and medium bombers swept over the beachhead to attack assembly areas, troop concentrations, and tanks. The emphasis was placed on the 45th and 56 Division fronts, with dive bombers and medium bombers striking both the Factory and Carroceto, while heavy bombers worked over the communication lines feeding into the Rome area.

At the end of the first day of the big push the enemy had made only slight gains in the sectors of the 45th and 56 Divisions at considerable cost in tanks and personnel. It was evident that most of the attacks were intended only as diversions to wear down the strength of the defending troops and to pin reserves. The enemy had not yet committed his main force.

The Second Day, 17 February

Before midnight on 16 February the enemy resumed the attack in the critical Albano road sector. (Map No. 16.) One company of the *725th Infantry Regiment (715th Infantry Division)* worked around both flanks of Company E, 157th Infantry, astride the road, while a second company infiltrated directly into Company E's positions. During the night the enemy slowly wiped out the forward positions from both the front and rear, forcing the remnants of the company into a small area around the command post. Here three tanks of the 191st Tank Battalion under the command of 1st Lt. Tommy L. Cobb, Jr., assisted them in holding out. The tanks fired their 75-mm. guns at point-blank range into the oncoming waves of troops and swept the surrounding fields with their .50-caliber machine guns. Before dawn Capt. Felix L. Sparks had only fourteen men left of his company and four men of Company H, his men were almost out of ammunition, and all supply routes were cut. Four enemy tanks were closing in on the flanks when at 0500 he received permission to withdraw to the west of the Albano road. With the aid of Lieutenant Cobb's M-4 Shermans, which knocked



BOMB CONCENTRATIONS ON CAMPOLEONE STATION *and other targets along the railroad from Rome were in direct support of the hard-pressed VI Corps troops. The smoke and dust of direct hits blanket the station, while at the right a lone bomb hit straddles the tracks.*

out at least two of the enemy tanks, and a protective smoke screen laid down by the artillery, the handful of men fought its way out of the trap. The 2d Battalion, 179th Infantry, also under pressure during the night, sent a platoon west to contact the 157th Infantry, without success. A dangerous gap was opening up between the two regiments.

The enemy lost no time in exploiting the tactical advantage he had won by his successful night attack. Striking swiftly and in force he pressed through the gap he had opened along the Albano road. At 0740 an estimated thirty-five Focke-Wulf 190's and Messerschmitt 109's bombed and strafed the 45th Division's front line. A few minutes later both the 2d and 3d Battalions, 179th Infantry, were under attack by a powerful force composed of the *725th Infantry Regiment (715th Infantry Division)*, two battalions of the *145th Infantry Regiment (65th Infantry Division)*, and part of the *741st Infantry Regiment (114th Light Division)*. During the day approximately sixty tanks, employed in small groups, supported the infantry.

One force of tanks and infantry moved southeast from the Factory to attack the 3d Battalion along the north-south road a mile to the east of the Albano road, while a second force, after driving south from Carroceto along the highway, swung east through the former positions of Company E, 157th Infantry, to strike the 2d Battalion, 179th Infantry, in the flank. Company G, 179th Infantry, which had been under attack most of the night, was virtually isolated by this thrust. In order to protect his exposed left flank, the commander of the 179th Infantry, Colonel Kammerer, at 0855 ordered the 2d and 3d Battalions to withdraw 1,000 yards to the west branch of Carroceto Creek. Under cover of a smoke screen the 2d Battalion attempted to extricate itself from its untenable position. Company G was virtually destroyed; Companies E and F supported by Company A were unable to form a line until they had fallen back to the dead-end road less than a mile north of the final beachhead line. Again at 1040 thirty-five Focke-Wulf 190's and eight Messerschmitt 109's were over bombing and strafing. One bomb struck the 3d Battalion

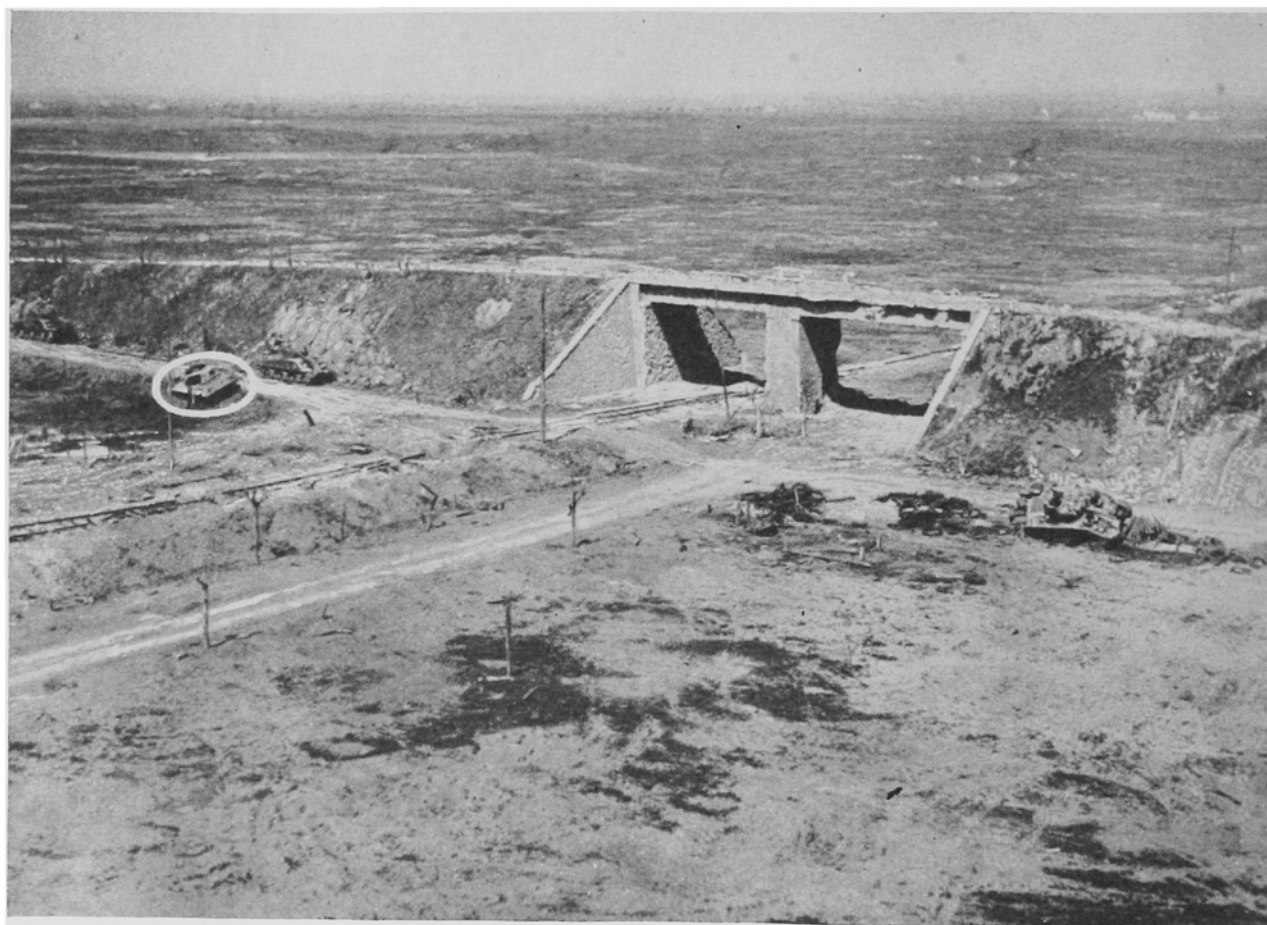
command post, knocking out all communication lines. Tank destroyers and infantry fought desperately to hold off the enemy tanks, and the 4.2-inch mortars of the 83d Chemical Battalion grew hot as the sweating crews poured round after round into the seemingly unending waves of enemy infantry. At 0855, when the 3d Battalion had completed its move back to tie in with the 2d Battalion north of the dead-end road, the enemy had succeeded in driving a wedge two miles wide and over a mile deep into the center of the 45th Division front.

To aid the hard-pressed infantry, VI Corps brought to bear all the resources of its greatly superior artillery and air power. In addition to the 432 guns of Corps and division artillery, three companies of tanks from the 1st Armored Division and four batteries of 90-mm. antiaircraft guns were employed on ground targets, and two cruisers assisted with the fire of their naval guns on the flanks of the beachhead. All the resources of XII Air Support Command were put at the disposal of VI Corps. Counting only bombers, 198 fighter-bomber, 69 light-bomber, 176 medium-bomber, and 288 heavy-bomber sorties were flown in direct support of VI Corps. The heavy B-17 Flying Fortresses and B-24 Liberators and the Mitchell and Marauder medium bombers concentrated on Campoleone and targets up the Albano road; striking closer to the front lines, fighter-bombers blasted the already battered Factory, Carroceto, and the overpass; and during the hours of darkness armed reconnaissance planes and Wellington bombers patrolled all roads leading into the beachhead. The total weight of bombs dropped and the number of heavy bombers employed was the greatest up to that date ever allotted in direct support of an army. The term "direct support" was no misnomer for many of the big planes swinging in from the direction of Rome overshot their target at Campoleone and dropped their loads on the Factory, only a few hundred yards from the front lines. To the weary troops, looking up from the muddy blood-stained battlefield, the view of formation after formation of giant bombers sweeping majestically over the beachhead was a cheering sight.

During the afternoon the enemy attempted to broaden and deepen the salient he had won. Fresh troops were committed on the *3d Panzer Grenadier Division* front to bring the total enemy force involved to approximately fourteen infantry battalions. In most instances the attacks were made by small battle groups of battalion strength which were rotated frequently to keep fresh troops in the attack while units battered by the intense artillery fire and bombing were withdrawn to be reorganized. The main pressure continued to be exerted down the Albano road and to the east of it against the 2d and 3d Battalions, 179th Infantry. Tanks and infantry penetrated as far as the junction with the dead-end road where the tanks found conceal-

ment behind a group of farmhouses and the infantry proceeded to dig in. Two tanks broke through to the first overpass along the Albano road before they were stopped. On the west side of the highway the 2d Battalion, 157th Infantry, was almost surrounded by small groups of enemy infantry infiltrating through the deep ravines lying between the battalion and the 167 Brigade to the left. In the afternoon the regimental command post was bombed and communications broke down. When the lines were restored, the battalion reported that it was still intact. On the right shoulder of the salient, Company G, 180th Infantry, extended its left flank to maintain contact with Company K, 179th Infantry. Although it was in an exposed

THE FIRST OVERPASS ABOVE ANZIO, where the east-west road crosses the main highway to Albano, was the scene of enemy artillery concentration as Allied tanks advanced northward to meet the counter-attack on 17 February. A German tank (circled) can be seen at left center.



position and under constant pressure, Company G held its ground. The enemy's efforts to widen the salient so far had failed.

Late in the morning of 17 February General Harmon was ordered to employ one battalion of medium tanks in a counterattack to support the 179th Infantry. Moving out shortly after noon Company H, 1st Armored Regiment, at 1410 reached the first overpass where the east-west road crosses the main highway. One platoon advanced 500 yards farther up the road and assisted in holding off the enemy tanks attacking toward the overpass. Company I followed the "bowling alley" across the open fields southeast of the Factory to support the 3d Battalion, 179th Infantry. Road-bound and under fire from enemy tank guns, it made little progress. At dusk both companies were withdrawn. They had assisted in holding off the enemy armor, but, unable to maneuver off the roads and lacking infantry support, the tanks were able to do little toward regaining the lost ground.

The enemy penetration down the Albano road had brought him dangerously near the final beach-head line of defense. In order to relieve some of the pressure on the 45th Division and to add depth to the defense, General Lucas assigned to the 1 Division, less the 3 Brigade which remained in Corps reserve, the task of holding a 2-mile sector of the final beachhead line of defense extending east and west from the first overpass on the Albano road. The 1 Division was tied in with the 56 Division on its left and the 1st Battalion, 179th Infantry, on its right. Corps also attached the 2d Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry, to the 45th Division. The battalion was placed under the control of the 157th Infantry and moved up to the first overpass, in position to relieve the 3d Battalion, 157th Infantry. The 56 Division strengthened its 167 Brigade with elements of the 168 Brigade which had been employed successfully that morning to wipe out the wedge the enemy had driven in the division's line the previous day. These shifts of units were accompanied by changes in personnel: Maj. Gen. G. W. R. Templer took command of both 56 and 1 Divisions when General Penney was wounded by a

shell fragment, and General Truscott left the 3d Division to become Deputy Commander of VI Corps, his former position being filled by Brig. Gen. John W. O'Daniel.

In an effort to lessen the depth of the enemy penetration and to obtain a more defensible line, General Eagles ordered the 2d and 3d Battalions, 179th Infantry, and the 3d Battalion, 157th Infantry, to launch a counterattack on the night of 17-18 February. The 179th Infantry was to reach the west branch of the Carroceto Creek, an advance of 1,000 yards, while the 3d Battalion, 157th Infantry, was to reach a parallel position on the Albano road where it would be in position to tie in with the beleaguered 2d Battalion west of the highway. Maj. Asbury W. Lee's 191st Tank Battalion was to support the attack. At that time the 3d Battalion, 179th Infantry, had been reduced to 274 men and the 2d Battalion, even with Company A attached, was in little better condition. The two depleted battalions jumped off on schedule at 2300; the 3d Battalion, 157th Infantry, was delayed. Capt. Merle M. Mitchell, the battalion commander, had been wounded in the stomach and shoulder by enemy tank fire. Refusing to be evacuated he personally reconnoitered the route of advance and led his troops forward beyond the line of departure. Hampered by the necessity of using runners to maintain communications with his units and by pressure from the enemy, Captain Mitchell's attack did not get under way until 0030. The enemy had already succeeded in bringing up machine guns and consolidating his gains along the Albano road. The battalion encountered such heavy fire that it got no farther up the road than the junction with the dead-end road, almost 1,000 yards short of its objective. Lt. Col. Charles D. Wiegand, commanding the 2d Battalion, 179th Infantry, found his left flank exposed to attack from the west. Momentarily on the defensive, the enemy returned to the attack. Company E was partly cut off by enemy tanks and enemy infantry who came down the Albano road in half-tracks and unloaded at the corner of the dead-end road. Colonel Wiegand was forced to order a withdrawal. To the right, Companies K

and L reached their objectives only to find that Company K was in a trap. The situation became confused. Enemy artillery fire knocked out all communications between the 2d Battalion and regimental headquarters making it difficult for Colonel Kammerer to keep abreast of the situation. The counterattack had failed. It lacked sufficient strength to throw the enemy off balance and it left the troops of the 179th Infantry in an exposed position.

The Crisis, 18–19 February

All through the stormy night of 17–18 February the enemy moved up fresh units in preparation for a knockout blow, and even the counterattack launched by the 179th Infantry had not prevented him from continuing his customary tactics of infiltrating small groups under cover of darkness. During the night hours he paid special attention to the shoulders of the salient. On the left, enemy units, infiltrating along the ravines which drain into the Moletta River, got between the 167 Brigade and the 2d Battalion, 157th Infantry, cutting the battalion's supply route. On the right, Companies G and F of the 2d Battalion, 180th Infantry, holding the left flank along La Ficoccia Creek, were harassed by enemy tanks operating along the north-south road and enemy infantry infiltrating into their positions. Artillery fire worked over the units holding the final beachhead line. Behind this screen of activity the enemy completed preparations for what was to be his supreme effort to effect a breakthrough. During the day he was to employ all of the *721st*, *741st*, and *735th Infantry Regiments*, and the *309th* and *29th Panzer Grenadier Regiments*. Armor continued to be used in small groups but on a more extensive scale than on any previous day. Each infantry unit had tank support; in the afternoon, when elements of the enemy reserve—the *26th Panzer* and *29th Panzer Grenadier Divisions*—were committed, tanks were employed with as many as twelve in a group. (Map No. 17.)

The enemy launched his first thrust at dawn. Capitalizing on the confusion resulting from the

night infiltration and the unsuccessful Allied counterattack, he thrust deep into the positions of the 179th Infantry. Company K was virtually destroyed and only remnants of the 3d Battalion filtered back to the final beachhead line. Enemy tanks moved down the "bowling alley" until stopped by a blown bridge; enemy infantry infiltrating to the south and southeast reached the positions along the final beachhead line held by the 1 Loyals, east of the first overpass, and to its right by the 1st Battalion, 179th Infantry, and 1st Battalion, 180th Infantry. These initial attacks, which were not in great strength, were beaten off. For Company I of the 2d Battalion, 157th Infantry, which was holding a small area directly in front of the overpass, this was the second day of such attacks. The ring of barbed wire surrounding the company was littered with bodies of dead and moaning Germans who only a few moments before had been shouting confidently, "At ease, Company I," "Watch out, Company I, here we come!" Company I was also suffering terrific losses. Enemy 170-mm. and 210-mm. guns, registered on the overpass, blasted huge craters out of the swampy ground into which oozed muddy water to cover the torn remnants of what had been a rifleman or a machine-gun crew. One by one, five of Capt. James G. Evans' company officers were killed by the artillery fire and he was hard-pressed to find men to mend the breaks in the wire and man the machine guns covering the Albano road. Some ammunition reached the company during the night, but no food or water had been brought up for two days. The wounded had to be left in water-logged slit trenches where aid men gave them what help they could offer. Although the infantry attacks could be and were repulsed there was no relief from the cold, sleepless nights nor from the constant pounding the men were taking from artillery fire.

The 2d Battalion, 179th Infantry, almost cut off by the tank penetrations on its left and the collapse of the 3d Battalion on its right, withdrew under covering fire of Company A. By the middle of the morning the 179th Infantry had been driven back to the positions covering the final beachhead line.

To its right the 2d Battalion, 180th Infantry, was under attack from three sides by enemy tanks operating along the roads east of the Factory. Companies F and G at 0625 were ordered to withdraw a half mile to the east. Company F, led by Capt. Robert A. Guenthner, and a platoon of Company G extricated themselves; 1st Lt. Benjamin A. Blackmer who had taken over command of Company G never received the order. Completely surrounded, the company fought off every enemy effort to overrun it. On the other shoulder of the salient the beleaguered 2d Battalion, 157th Infantry, virtually cut off from all support, likewise held. Although the enemy had widened his penetration and driven it a half mile deeper into the positions of the 45th Division, the courage and staying power of the American infantrymen still stood in the way of a breakthrough.

The bloody struggle continued all morning under an overcast sky which prevented a repetition of the previous day's tremendous program of air support. Fighter-bombers, which flew 120 sorties, gave effective close support against enemy tanks and infantry, and twenty-four light bombers covered the Factory area with fragmentation bombs. Medium and heavy bombers were unable to get off the ground. However, there was no reduction in the amount of artillery fire which fell on the attacking troops. Many of the Allied artillery ground observers became casualties or had their radios and telephones shot out, but the enemy's efforts to keep down the cub observation planes failed. At 1110 Capt. William H. McKay, a cub pilot observing for the 45th Division artillery, spotted a force of tanks and about 2,500 Germans moving south from Carroceto along the Albano road, and radioed the news to the artillery. Within twelve minutes the Corps Fire Control Center had massed the fire of 224 British and American guns on the target. The ground over which the Germans were marching seemed to blow up and when the smoke cleared the enemy force had disintegrated. In the next fifty minutes, under the direction of Captain McKay, the concentrated fire of these guns was shifted to four other locations. Many enemy units were disorgan-

ized and decimated before they were even in position to attack, yet there appeared to be no end to the waves of enemy infantry thrown against the 45th Division.

At 1400, when Col. William O. Darby took command of the 179th Infantry, the situation appeared desperate. The shattered 3d Battalion had been withdrawn for reorganization, the 2d Battalion was at less than half strength and nearly exhausted. Only the 1st Battalion was capable of organized resistance. All communication lines between the regiment and its battalions were out, further complicating the task of creating a coordinated defense. Calling together his battalion commanders Colonel Darby ordered Colonel Johnson to hold the left sector with his 1st Battalion, reinforced with Company I; Colonel Wiegand, commander of the 2d Battalion, was to take over the right sector "with whatever troops he could find," and Maj. Merlin O. Tyron, commander of the 3d Battalion, was to "endeavor to get all stragglers and pick all men physically fit in the rear echelon." Colonel Darby favored falling back to the woods to reorganize. General Eagles replied to the request with an order to hold the final beachhead line at all costs and he promised the support of the 1st Battalion, 157th Infantry.

The 180th Infantry, on the right flank, was still largely intact, but its units were holding a long front exposed to enemy tank attacks and Company G was completely cut off. The enemy's tanks could operate almost at will down the Albano road and the "bowling alley." A large percentage of the division's antitank guns had been knocked out or overrun during the fighting of the past three days; the tanks of the 191st Tank Battalion and the tank destroyers of the 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion had suffered heavy losses while beating off the seemingly endless succession of enemy attacks. The 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion alone lost fourteen M-10's on 17 February. In order to obtain full defilade it was often necessary to dig the tank destroyers into the marshy ground. Once in place they were difficult to move and in some cases they had to be abandoned when the infantry withdrew.

In the late afternoon of 18 February, as the enemy prepared to make his heaviest attack of the day, the Allied defenders of the Anzio beachhead faced their most critical test.

The renewed enemy attack started with a thrust by twelve tanks down the "bowling alley." Only the blown bridge where the road crosses Carroceto Creek kept them from breaking through. Strung out along the road the tanks were able to fire directly into the fox holes of Company A, 180th Infantry. Under the cover of this fire the enemy infantry attacked. By 1750 the fighting was general along the whole front of the salient as far west as the overpass. Both Company A, 180th Infantry, and the 1st and 2d Battalions, 179th Infantry, held their ground. Small enemy units managed to infiltrate through the area of heavy brush growing along the regimental boundary north of the road where the line of defending troops was thin. The enemy force had been whittled down until it was too weak to exploit its penetration and the infiltrating units were wiped out during the night. Farther to the west the 1st Battalion, 179th Infantry, and the 1 Loyals were attacked by enemy troops who came in across the open fields south of the dead-end road. For four hours the enemy troops fought to break through east of the overpass. At one time they penetrated all the way to the lateral road before they were driven back in hand-to-hand fighting. Tanks of the 1st Armored Division, patrolling the lateral road, helped the infantry hold off the enemy until the force of the attacks was spent. Compelled to advance across open country, the enemy was taking terrific casualties from artillery, mortar, and machine-gun fire. At 2130 there was evidence that the enemy was pulling back to reorganize. Never again was he to come so close to rolling up the final beachhead line.

During the night of 18-19 February, the 45th Division took advantage of a temporary lull in the enemy attacks to strengthen its positions while VI Corps assembled a counterattack force. (Map No. 18.) West of the Albano road the 2d Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry, under the command of Lt. Col. Wilhelm P. Johnson, managed to break through

to the 2d Battalion, 157th Infantry, making it possible to send supplies and ammunition forward to the beleaguered troops. General Eagles released the 1st Battalion, 157th Infantry, from division reserve and attached it to the 179th Infantry. The fresh troops were employed to relieve the decimated 2d Battalion, 179th Infantry, along the lateral road, thereby strengthening the final beachhead line at a critical point. Behind the line Major Tyron reorganized the remnants of the 3d Battalion, 179th Infantry, and reinforced them with 250 men who were brought up from rear areas. Combat groups organized within the 2d and 3d Battalions were prepared for use in bolstering the 1st Battalion. On the left of the 179th Infantry the 1 Loyals adopted the same policy of pressing rear-echelon troops into service to replace casualties. To give more armored support Company F, 1st Armored Regiment, moved into position along the lateral road where it could support the infantry.

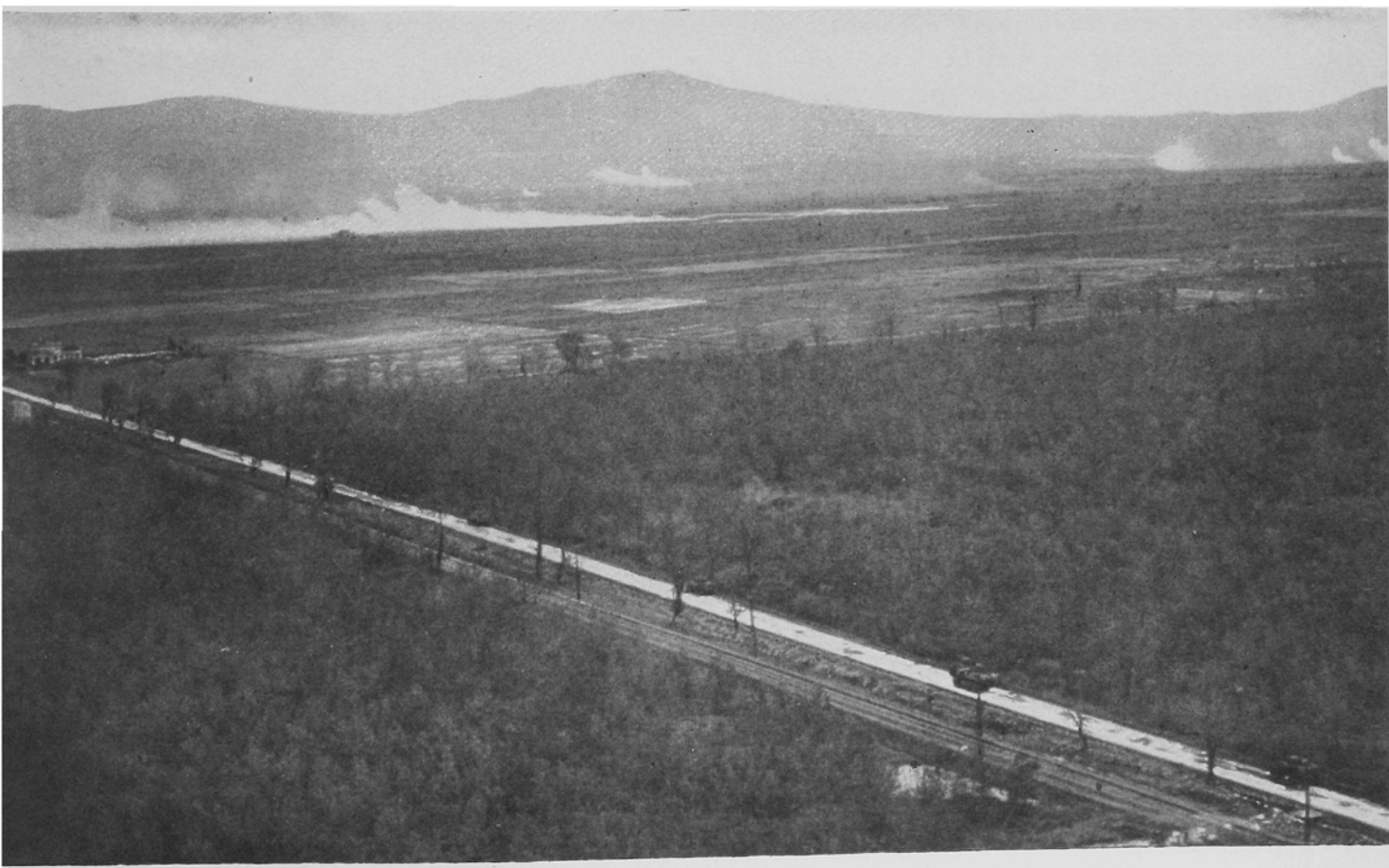
The 180th Infantry, holding the right shoulder of the salient, also took advantage of the night hours to readjust its line. The forward companies were drawn back from the north and west to a shorter line extending from just north of the lateral road to the village of Carano. Although the regiment had been under constant artillery fire and local tank and infantry attacks, its losses had been comparatively light. Even the troops of Company G fought their way out of the trap where they had been held throughout the daylight hours of 18 February. Lieutenant Blackmer's company had been reduced by the withdrawal of the 3d Platoon and by casualties until there were barely fifty men left. Communication lines to the rear had been cut, the radio was damaged, and there were no supplies; there were no grenades, no mortar shells, and only a few rounds left for the rifles and machine guns. Four of the company officers had been evacuated on the first night of the attack and many of the men were beginning to suffer from trench foot. Exposed in no man's land, the tiny force was subject to friendly artillery fire as well as to enemy attacks. At 1430 Lieutenant Blackmer ordered his men to pull back 300 yards farther down La Ficoc-

cia Creek; but Allied artillery spotted his position and began firing on the company. Pfc. William J. Johnston, a machine gunner, was left for dead by his comrades. Though seriously wounded Johnston attempted to crawl back up the stream bank to his gun. A passing soldier assisted him and he resumed firing in an effort to hold off the enemy while his company organized its new position. At 1600 Pfc. Robert Keefe, a company runner, reached battalion headquarters and then crawled back through the enemy lines with orders for Lieutenant Blackmer to withdraw. After dark the company fought its way through the enemy units dug in to its rear and waded over a mile through the waist-deep water of the creek to reach the regiment's new line

of defense. By some miracle Johnston also managed to crawl back to safety the next morning. The spirit of these men could not be broken. When Colonel Dulaney called 2d Battalion headquarters to find out about Company G, he was told that "Blackmer came out grinning." The atmosphere of confusion and desperation which had marked the fighting during the late afternoon hours of 18 February was changing to a spirit of confidence as the 45th Division reestablished an integrated line of defense, and communication between units was restored.

In view of the possibility that the enemy might employ airborne troops in conjunction with a continuation of his infantry and tank attacks, VI

TANKS MOVE UP THE ALBANO Road on 19 February from Padiglione Woods toward the front lines where smoke obscures the lateral road. These units of the 1st Armored Division were going forward in support of the 45th Division's stand to halt the German drive in that sector.





ENGINEERS BRIDGE A STREAM on a road from Nettuno to the front. Frequent rains and enemy shell-fire damage made this a difficult task, but the roads had to be kept open to move armor against the Germans.

Corps, on the afternoon of 18 February, issued an order dividing the beachhead area into zones of defense against airborne attacks. Forward zones were made the responsibility of the units holding the beachhead line of defense; responsibility for the rear areas was divided among the 35th Anti-aircraft Artillery Brigade, the 18th Field Artillery Brigade, the 39th Engineers, and the 1st Special Service Force. Within each zone a mobile force of at least one company was to be held on the alert, and all roads were to be patrolled constantly during the hours of darkness. By employing reconnaissance units and rear-echelon troops for the anti-parachutist patrols, the drain on the critically short supply of infantry units was kept to a minimum.

The enemy devoted the night hours of 18-19 February to assembling his forces for what was to be his last serious effort to break through the final beachhead line of defense. (Map No. 18.) At 0400 on the morning of 19 February enemy medium- and heavy-caliber artillery fire was laid down along the forward edge of the salient, followed ten minutes later by an infantry attack. The 45th Division artillery replied with prepared defensive

fires, concentrating on the front of the 1st Battalion, 179th Infantry, and the 1 Loyals. Two battalions of the enemy's reserve 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (29th Panzer Grenadier Division), supported by three tanks, overran the right flank company of the 1 Loyals and penetrated to the lateral road. The remainder of the 1 Loyals and the 179th Infantry stood firm. By 0800, pounded by shells from the tank guns of Company F, 1st Armored Regiment, and by a tremendous concentration of artillery fire, the enemy was forced to withdraw, leaving only a pocket of resistance around a group of houses on the lateral road. During the morning, enemy tanks tried repeatedly and unsuccessfully to operate down the Albano road. Destroyers of the 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion knocked out two Mark VI Tigers and five Mark IV's. At noon when the enemy tried a final infantry attack down the same axis it was effectively broken up by artillery fire before any contact had been made. Although there was an increase in the enemy air effort over the previous day, marked by repeated bombing and strafing raids over the forward lines, the peak of the enemy offensive had been passed.

The Battle is Won, 19-20 February

While the enemy was regrouping for his last effort to crack the final beachhead line of defense, VI Corps completed preparations for a counter-attack. The plan called for an attack to drive the enemy back to a line extending in an arc from the stream crossing just north of the junction of the

dead-end and Albano roads eastward and slightly northward toward the village of Carano. Two forces were to be employed: Force T, under General Templer, consisting of the 169 Brigade, was to attack on Corps order from the vicinity of the overpass to seize the ground north of the dead-end road; Force H, under General Harmon, consisting of the 6th Armored Infantry (less the 2d

PRISONERS FORMED LONG COLUMNS as they were marched single file from the battle area. Passing a group of curious American infantrymen on 19 February, these German captives, including men from the 114 Light Division, displayed little interest in their captors.



Battalion), a battalion of medium tanks, and the 30th Infantry, which was moved over from the less active 3d Division front, was to attack at 0630 on 19 February up the "bowling alley" to the junction with the first north-south road. The original intention was to have the two forces attack simultaneously to pinch off the enemy troops in the nose of the salient. Inability on the part of Force T to assemble its equipment before the time scheduled necessitated a modification of the plan to a limited objective attack by Task Force H. (Map No. 18.) On the night of 17-18 February enemy planes dropped naval mines in the harbor of Anzio. The port was closed until the mines were cleared and the newly arrived 169 Brigade was delayed in unloading its equipment. Thus on February 19 only Task Force H was prepared to jump off when dawn broke on what promised to be a clear, warm day.

The artillery carried out an elaborate fire plan to support the attack. Eight British field artillery regiments were coordinated to fire a supporting barrage which was laid down in front of the line of departure at 0600 and then lifted on call. In addition, eight battalions of Corps artillery fired prepared concentrations for forty-five minutes on enemy assembly areas north and east of the Factory. Naval and 90-mm. antiaircraft guns fired on the Factory and Carroceto, while fighter-bombers and medium bombers, part of a large air support program, likewise blasted assembly areas. One wooded area northeast of the Factory was struck by 132 fighter-bombers and 48 medium bombers, and another 48 mediums scattered fragmentation bombs on an assembly area along the stream to the north of the woods.

Force H attacked on schedule at 0630. Colonel Steele's 6th Armored Infantry and Colonel McGarr's 30th Infantry advanced abreast along the axis of the "bowling alley" with the 6th Armored Infantry south of the road and the 30th Infantry, in column of battalions, astride and north of the road.

Col. Louis V. Hightower, commander of the 1st Armored Regiment, employed two medium tank

companies: Company G in direct support of the infantry and Company H assisting on the right flank. The attack started well. At 0820 the 30th Infantry had advanced a mile beyond the line of departure, and the armored infantry on its left was meeting only slight resistance. Then the advance slowed. The 2d Battalion, leading the 30th Infantry, was under fire from enemy Mark VI tanks as well as from troops concealed along the banks of La Ficoccia Creek and in the brush on the north side of the road. Lt. Col. Lyle W. Bernard was wounded and Lt. Col. Woodrow W. Stromberg took over the 2d Battalion. Company E was reduced to one officer and fifty men and Company F also was badly chewed up. The tanks of Company G, 1st Armored Regiment, could offer little assistance as they were held up until the engineers completed work on a bridge. At 1330 the attack was resumed. Company G's tanks crossed the repaired bridge and drove up the diagonal road spreading panic among the already disorganized enemy troops. The tanks of Company H also were successful. After advancing over a mile up the road leading north from Padiglione, they turned west to cover the bridge across Spaccasassi Creek. Blasting the enemy infantry from the stream bed and from houses along the road, they took so many prisoners that they had to call on the 180th Infantry to dispose of them. At 1620, 19 February, when General Harmon called a halt to the advance, the infantry had reached the objective called for in VI Corps' order. The main assault force was withdrawn during the night. Two battalions, left as a covering force, engaged in aggressive patrolling throughout 20 February and then were withdrawn. In its attack, Force H captured two hundred prisoners representing elements of the *741st*, *721st*, and *735th Infantry Regiments* and a company of the *114th Engineer Battalion*.

During the afternoon of 19 February the 1 Loyals and a company of the 2 North Staffs, supported by tanks of the 46 Royal Tank Regiment, attacked to wipe out the pocket of resistance along the lateral road left by the enemy's penetration in the morning. At 1600 the houses in which the

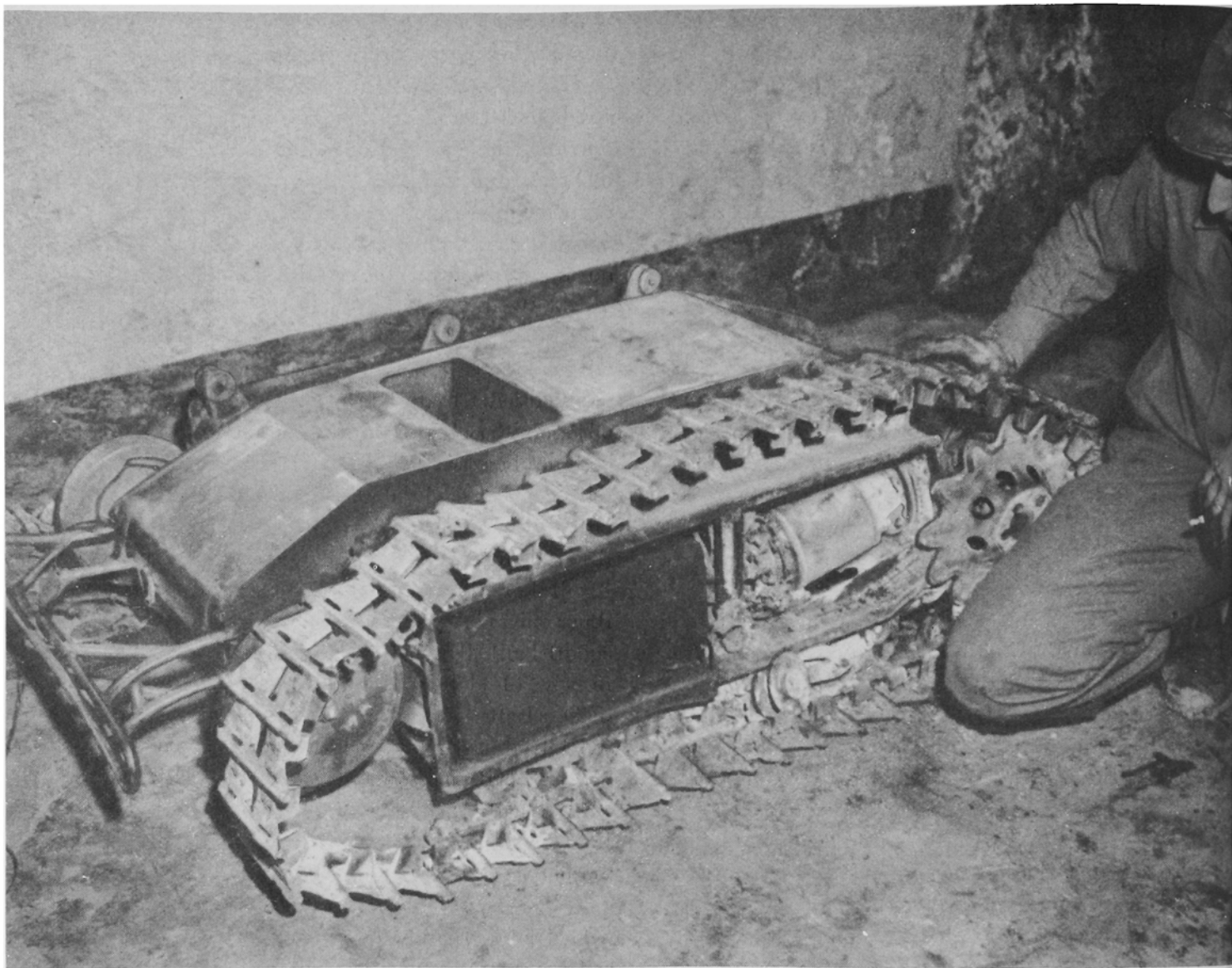
enemy troops had barricaded themselves were retaken. An hour earlier a platoon of Company D, 1st Armored Regiment, drove up the Albano road almost to the junction with the dead-end road. Its mission was to cause as much confusion and damage as possible. Three of the tanks were knocked out by enemy antitank guns, and the remaining tanks were forced to withdraw under cover of a smoke screen. Before pulling back, the platoon assisted the British counterattack by driving a large force of the enemy from cover. The British took over 200 prisoners, who together with the prisoners taken by Force H, brought the total for the day to 413. General Lucas signaled the victory with a message to his troops: "Swell work today. Keep after them."

The decline in the size of the forces, both in infantry and in tanks, which the enemy employed in his attacks on the morning of 19 February, the large number and the variety of units represented by the prisoners taken during the counterattacks, and above all the picture of disorganization within units and the spirit of disillusionment exhibited by the enemy prisoners indicated that VI Corps by the evening of 19 February had won its battle. It was anticipated that the enemy would keep up the pressure, for the prestige of the German Army was at stake. It was considered possible that General Mackensen would attempt another major effort to break through to the sea. Still, all the evidence on 19 February pointed to the conclusion that the German *Fourteenth Army* was too near the point of exhaustion to continue the battle on the scale of the past three days without either bringing up additional fresh troops or pausing for a period of rest and reorganization. Since the enemy had already committed elements of the *26th Panzer* and *29th Panzer Grenadier Divisions*, which he had intended to hold in reserve to exploit a breakthrough, it was believed unlikely that he had many fresh troops left.

The fighting on 20 February only served to buttress the conclusion that VI Corps had broken the back of the enemy offensive. At 0430 an enemy force estimated at company strength attacked the

1 Loyals east of the overpass. The attack was easily repulsed. Prisoners taken from the *67th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (26th Panzer Division)* reported that the attack had started with a battalion but that artillery fire had broken it up and only a company had reached the Allied lines. Prisoners taken later in the morning by the 179th Infantry revealed a condition of even greater confusion in the ranks of the *29th Panzer Grenadier Division*. According to the prisoners from the *71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment*, both the *71st* and *45th Panzer Grenadier Regiments* were to have attacked at 0400, 19 February. Disrupted communications had caused such confusion in the transmission of orders that the *71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment* failed to attack until the morning of 20 February. Leaving its assembly area north of the Factory in the early morning hours, the *1st Battalion* of the regiment had advanced into the no man's land in the center of the salient. Under fire from all directions, the companies became confused, lost their bearings, and became hopelessly mixed up. The battalion commander called a halt to reconnoiter. He found that the *15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment*, which was supposed to be on his right, was to his rear; the two connecting companies had been destroyed, and the *3d Battalion* of his own regiment had failed to follow up. Left isolated and under terrific artillery fire, the battalion disintegrated. Although the enemy continued his attacks on the shoulders of the salient, the debacle on the morning of 20 February marked a bloody end to his efforts to achieve a breakthrough.

The German forces lost heavily both in personnel and equipment during their drive to wipe out the Anzio beachhead. In their 5-day attack, 16–20 February, the enemy suffered at least 5,389 battle casualties in killed, wounded, and missing. Enemy prisoners taken by VI Corps numbered 609. The German High Command never hesitated to sacrifice troops to achieve an important objective, and the elimination of the beachhead had become as much a question of prestige as of military strategy. On 21 February the 179th Infantry counted about 500 bodies lying in front of its sector. An escaped



THE GERMAN "GOLIATH" TANK, *the enemy's secret weapon which proved a failure, was nothing more than a miniature mobile explosives container. On the side of this "Goliath" can be seen the battery from which power was drawn to operate the motor at the right.*

American prisoner reported that while being marched up the Albano road he had seen enemy dead stacked up like cordwood in piles of 150 each. Bulldozers were being employed to dig mass graves for what he estimated to be over 1,500 bodies. Most of the German units which entered the bitterly contested corridor along the Albano road had to be withdrawn for a period of rest and rehabilitation.

The successful battle fought by the Allied troops to hold their beachhead was won at a price lower than that paid by the enemy, but still high enough to cause concern to the already depleted units of VI Corps. Although the landing of new units in the period 16-20 February increased the effective strength of VI Corps from 86,915 to 96,401, the beachhead forces still numbered 21,268 less than their authorized strength. During this period,

battle casualties totaled 3,496 in killed, wounded, and missing. The Germans reported the capture of 1,304 Allied prisoners. Exposure, exhaustion, and particularly trench foot resulting from days spent in fox holes half-filled with water resulted in a total of 1,637 nonbattle casualties. Although high, the losses suffered by VI Corps would not have been serious had it been possible to draw the troops out of the line for a period of recuperation. During February there were no quiet periods at the beachhead. Every man was needed and the steady drain on the lives and energy of the defending troops never ceased.

The enemy had started his all-out drive to destroy the beachhead with many advantages. VI Corps was forced to defend a front of nearly thirty-five miles with less than five divisions of troops, many of whom had been in the line continuously for nearly a month; at the same time it had to maintain an adequate reserve. General Mackensen, with nearly ten divisions under his command, had the larger force, and many of his troops were fresher. Nor were the enemy's artillery and air power negligible factors. By concentrating his artillery fire on the area around the salient on either side of the Albano road he was able to subject the troops under attack to a merciless pounding, and the congested area of the beachhead offered an excellent target for his bombers. In spite of these advantages he had failed, because of the Allied superiority in artillery and air power, the inability of the enemy to employ his tanks in masses, the failure of his secret weapon (the "Goliath" remote-controlled tank), the breakdown of enemy morale, and, finally, the stubborn resistance of the Allied troops holding the beachhead.

Prisoners taken during the battle almost invariably commented on the "terrific" and "continuous" artillery fire, which caused heavy casualties, shattered nerves, destroyed morale, and brought some units to the verge of panic. In a report to Field Marshal Kesselring of 28 February, General Mackensen stated that artillery fire was responsible for the bulk of enemy casualties, and that 75 percent of all wounds had been inflicted by shell frag-

ments. In many cases attacking troops were completely cut off from any support; communication between units was dependent almost entirely on radio and on runners, many of whom never lived to deliver their messages. In some cases, as a result of the breakdown of supply services, units went for days without food. At the peak of the attack, for every shell the enemy artillery fired, VI Corps threw back from fifteen to twenty. The salient the enemy had driven into the 45th Division front became a veritable death trap for his tanks and infantry.

The Allied air bombing and artillery fire served to complement each other. An appreciable share of the responsibility for the breakdown of communications and the failure of supplies to reach forward units was due to the weight of bombs dropped along the axis of the Albano road from the Factory and Carroceto back to the Albano hills. Straining his reserves to the utmost, the enemy was able to fly an estimated total of 172 sorties on 16 February, the peak day of his performance. The next day 288 Allied heavy bombers alone were over the beachhead. Whereas the number of enemy sorties steadily declined the Allied air effort was curtailed only by bad weather and lack of targets.

Many enemy prisoners attributed their failure to lack of adequate tank support. This was due partly to losses suffered during the fighting, but largely to unfavorable tank terrain. Both enemy and Allied tanks were roadbound and consequently could be employed only in small groups. In some cases the lead tank and rear tank of a column were knocked out, blocking the escape of the remainder; wherever tanks were used in groups of more than two or three they made excellent targets for artillery. At no time did tanks prove a crucial factor in the final result of the battle, although the prisoners paid tribute to the effectiveness with which the 1st Armored Division tanks were employed in the counterattacks on 19 February.

The enemy's touted secret weapon, the Goliath tank, proved to be a dud. This was a squat miniature tank loaded with explosive and designed to

breach obstacles such as mine fields, barbed wire, and concrete walls. The tanks were controlled and exploded by electrical impulses transmitted through a long cable. But for the capture of prisoners, VI Corps troops during the period of the offensive would not have been aware of the midget tank's presence at the beachhead. According to an engineer of the *813th Engineer Company*, which was sent to the beachhead expressly for the offensive, the Goliaths were employed only on the first day of the attack, when thirteen of them bogged down; of these, three were blown up by Allied artillery fire and the other ten were dragged away.

The morale of the enemy troops declined rapidly as the attack bogged down. They had been promised an easy victory. The *29th Panzer Grenadier Division* went into the battle in high spirits. The troops had heard rumors that large numbers of

Allied prisoners had been taken, that the attack was progressing favorably, that for once the German Air Force would not be busy on another front, and that they would be able to fight with tanks again. When they were subjected to Allied bombing and arrived on the front in the midst of what a prisoner called "carnage," they lost all desire to continue the attack. They felt they had been deceived and their morale suffered accordingly.

The fighting spirit of the individual Allied soldier played an important part in the successful defense of the beachhead. During the dark hours of 18 February when the enemy infantry seemed to be infiltrating everywhere, when communications broke down, and when whole companies and battalions were cut off, it was the will to win of the Allied troops which gave them the strength to hold. With this spirit, the men of VI Corps had won the major battle in defense of the beachhead.

VI CORPS HOLDS THE BEACHHEAD (20 February-3 March)

Although the major enemy offensive to drive VI Corps into the sea had been repulsed, the Germans had no intention of abandoning their ultimate objective of annihilating the Anzio beachhead. Convinced that an immediate continuation of the frontal attack down the Albano road would be futile, the enemy turned his attention to the shoulders of the salient he had driven into the center of the beachhead defenses. At first, the Germans planned to mass their available forces against the eastern flank of the salient, along Spaccassasi Creek above Padiglione; but on 20 February they decided to concentrate on the western shoulder below Buonriposo Ridge. The Germans hoped that, by wearing down the shoulders of the salient, they would weaken the Allied forces holding the central beachhead defense sector so that the frontal attack down the Albano road could be successfully renewed.

Many German units suffered such heavy losses in the assaults of 16-20 February that they had lost their offensive punch. By 19 February, the combat strength of the *65th Infantry Division* was only 901 officers and men, and 4 days later this figure had been reduced to 673. The *735th Infantry Regiment* of the *715th Infantry Division* had only 185 officers and men on 20 February; this remnant was assigned to the *725th Infantry Regiment*, which was itself severely depleted and had to be withdrawn from the front on 23 February. Under such circumstances, the Germans had to

pause to regroup and replenish their forces before they could again launch a large-scale attack.

In view of the apparent German intention to continue the offensive, General Clark sent a message to General Lucas on 20 February urging him to make every effort to strengthen the weakened beachhead defenses. General Clark was particularly concerned about the shoulders of the salient, where the 157th and 180th Infantry's stubborn refusal to give ground had been a major factor in containing the enemy's drive. Steps were taken to reduce the front held by the exhausted regiments of the 45th Division and to organize effective reserve positions.

In the two days after the successful counter-attack launched by Force H on the morning of 19 February, the 6th Armored Infantry (less the 2d Battalion) and the 30th Infantry were withdrawn to positions near Padiglione and Campomorto and placed in Corps reserve. Here they were in position to support the 180th Infantry on the right shoulder of the salient. On 22 February one battalion of the 30th Infantry reverted to the 3d Division, the boundary between the 45th and 3d Divisions was moved 1,500 yards west from Carano, and the 3d Battalion, 30th Infantry, took over this new sector, thereby shortening the front of the 180th Infantry and adding strength to the critical shoulder.

Responsibility for the left shoulder of the salient passed to the 1 and 56 Divisions. The 1 Division

relieved the 3d Battalion, 157th Infantry, and the 2d Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry, in position north of the overpass and west of the Albano road. The 56 Division was given responsibility for relieving the 2d Battalion, 157th Infantry, which had succeeded in beating off every enemy attempt to destroy its hold on the anchor position of the left shoulder.

The effect of the shift of boundaries was to reduce the front of the 45th Division by nearly one-half. The division took steps immediately to reorganize its units and strengthen the final beachhead line by assisting in the construction of a new Corps reserve line, 2,000 yards south of the lateral road. A series of battalion positions was laid out and the work of preparing them for defense divided among the units in reserve. On 19 February VI Corps ordered the 35th Antiaircraft Artillery Brigade to assemble a force of 30 officers and 650 enlisted men to work on defenses and to be on 2-hour alert for use as Corps reserve. Under the direction of the 120th Engineer Combat Battalion the antiaircraft troops assisted the 45th Division in constructing new reserve positions in the wooded areas a mile to the south of the final beachhead line. At the same time, by rotating the units in the line, the 45th Division was able to rehabilitate its depleted and tired troops, absorb new replacements, and rebuild its efficiency as a fighting unit.

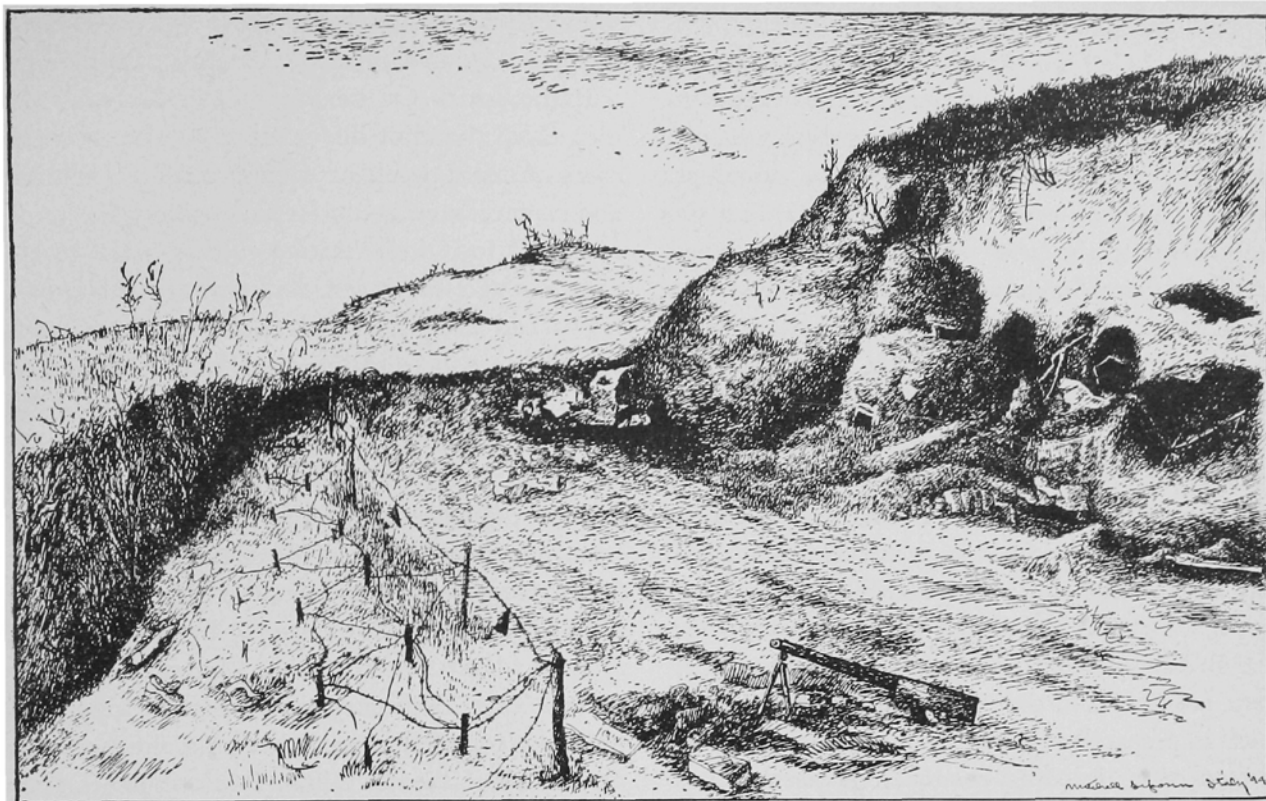
The 1 and 56 Divisions, which were now responsible for the left shoulder of the salient, also adopted a policy of rotating the forward troops in line. Lack of adequate replacements made it difficult to build up units depleted during the fighting for Campoleone and the Factory area as well as by the big attack. The brigades of the 1 Division were far below strength, and the 56 Division had only one brigade, the 169, which was fresh. Heavy fighting during the period 20–25 February further reduced the effective strength of the two divisions, and only the arrival of the 18 Brigade on 25 February, which was attached to the 1 Division, prevented the situation from becoming critical. With the aid of the additional troops, work was rushed on new defenses to tie in

with the 45th Division, while every effort was made to improve the old positions in the forward areas. The latter task was complicated by almost continuous pressure from the enemy against the shoulders of the salient.

The Battle of the Caves

The left shoulder of the salient was held throughout the period of the big offensive by the 157th Infantry (less the 1st Battalion), assisted by the 2d Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry. (Map No. 18.) The troops were under almost constant fire for six days and it was imperative that they be relieved if the hold on the left shoulder was to be maintained. On the night of 21–22 February, 1 Division troops moved up to effect the relief of the 3d Battalion, 157th Infantry, and the 2d Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry, in position north of the first overpass and west of the Albano road. Not much remained of Company I, 157th Infantry. Of the 8 officers and 159 enlisted men with which he had entered the battle Captain Evans could find only 3 officers and 68 men to lead out of his small area of shell-cratered ground north of the overpass. The rest of his men had either been captured, blown to bits by artillery fire, or had died fighting to prevent the enemy infantry from crawling through the barbed wire protecting the company area. The 1 Division occupied its new positions without any immediate reaction from the enemy; the 56 Division which was assigned the task of relieving the 2d Battalion, 157th Infantry, was less fortunate. It became involved in what came to be known as the battle of the caves.

At the beginning of the German offensive on 16 February, the 2d Battalion, 157th Infantry, under the command of Lt. Col. Laurence C. Brown, was covering a front of over 2,000 yards extending from a point 500 yards east of the Albano road into a maze of deep ravines from which flow the headwaters of the Moletta River west of the highway. (Maps No. 15 and 16.) Enemy tanks, driving down the Albano road, rolled up the battalion right flank; enemy infantry, infiltrating up the



THE CAVES, scene of bitter fighting on the left of the beachhead, are graphically depicted in this sketch by soldier-artist Mitchell Siporin.

ravines, overran the left flank and repeatedly cut the battalion's supply route to the south. As squads and platoons were cut off one by one, the battalion was finally reduced to a small area 600 yards west of the highway where a series of caves provided a natural fortress. On the night of 18–19 February the enemy got close enough to throw hand grenades into the battalion command post. Friendly artillery fire was called down on the caves and the draws around them, effectively breaking up the attack. That night, following the successful attack by the 2d Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry, supplies were brought up. The next night one hundred wounded were evacuated. From then on the battalion was virtually cut off. By preventing the enemy from widening the salient the battalion had aided materially in saving the beachhead, but fresh troops were needed if the position was to be held.

It was important that VI Corps retain control of the left shoulder and particularly of the network of dirt roads leading south to the final beachhead line. Once the enemy broke through to the lateral road west of the overpass he would be in position to cut the main supply route for the troops holding the Moletta River line.

Unfortunately the attempt of General Templer to relieve the trapped battalion coincided with the enemy's decision to continue the offensive in an area where rough terrain favored infiltration. On the night of 21 February the 2/7 Queens¹ (56 Division) reached the caves. On the way up the column was bombed and shelled and the supply train was held up by enemy opposition. An effort

¹The second battalion organized in the British Army which bore the designation: "7 Battalion, The Queen's Royal Regiment (West Surrey)."

to send tanks and antitank guns up the main highway also failed with the loss of three tanks and one gun. The British troops reached the caves without supplies, ammunition, or supporting weapons and they had suffered about seventy casualties. When they took over the positions guarding the approaches to the caves, they had to be equipped with American automatic weapons. Then the enemy attacked. Capt. George O. Hubbert, artillery liaison officer with the battalion, called for the artillery concentration which had been fired on the night of 18–19 February and again the draws around the caves were filled with exploding shells and the moans of wounded Germans. The enemy assault was broken up, but it was impossible for the 2d Battalion to leave the caves that night.

Fighting continued all day on 22 February while the British completed the task of occupying their new positions and the 2d Battalion assembled its men in preparation for a break-out. One party of fifteen men, including headquarters personnel, a mortar section, and artillery observers, was trapped in a group of houses 300 yards south of the caves. After dark an attempt was made to relieve the men and to clear a path through the enemy troops blocking the route of escape. Only the latter objective was achieved. At 0130, shielded by a dark night, Colonel Brown and his battalion, in column of companies, slipped out of the caves and struck south along the supply route toward the black-top road which marked the final beachhead line. Capt. Peter Graffagnino and his aid men elected to remain with the wounded, who had to be left behind. The troops had covered almost half the distance to safety when suddenly machine-gun and rifle fire lashed out at them from a group of houses. The men hit the ground and crawled for cover. The column was split. Colonel Brown and the first half of the column got through safely; the rest became scattered. Smoke was laid down over the area and in the early morning hours Captain Sparks and Capt. George D. Kessler, the battalion S-3, managed to bring out part of the column. Small groups continued to filter through during the day. Captain Sparks was left without a single man in his Com-

pany E until two days later when Sgt. Leon Siehr appeared. He had spent the last two days fighting with the British. Of the original battalion only 225 men escaped and of this number 90 were hospital cases. After a week of almost constant fighting and nerve-shattering mortar and artillery fire, some men had lost their hearing, others were barely able to walk. For seven days and nights the battalion had fought off defeat. That any man returned is a tribute to the courage and stamina of the American infantry soldiers who have made the battle of the caves an epic of defensive fighting.

The relief of the 2d Battalion, 157th Infantry, left the 2/7 Queens holding the caves and rolling farmland immediately to the south. Efforts of the 2/6 Queens to get supplies through had failed. Even urgent requests for supply by air had to be refused when stormy weather kept planes on the ground. On 23 February enemy infantry supported by tanks completed the work of sealing off the already diminished battalion. Two companies were overrun and a third was forced to withdraw into the caves with the battalion headquarters. After dark that night the remaining troops were divided into groups of twelve to fifteen and an attempt was made to infiltrate back to the positions of the 2/6 Queens. Few succeeded. The effort to hold the former positions of the 2d Battalion, 157th Infantry, had to be abandoned, and the enemy completed his occupation of the bulge in the western shoulder of the salient.

The battle of the caves did not end the fighting on the left shoulder. It was merely the most important and most costly action in a bloody war of attrition in which whole squads and platoons disappeared without leaving a trace. The deep ravines and rough nature of the country west of the Albano road made it impossible to develop a continuous line of defense or to employ artillery effectively against the enemy groups which infiltrated between and into the positions of the defending troops. All of the units of the 1 and 56 Divisions holding the forward areas were tired and under-strength; the units which were sent up to relieve them were in the same condition. The 56 Division

reported on 25 February that its 167 Brigade was at only 35 percent of effective strength, the 168 Brigade at 50 percent, and the 169 Brigade, which had seen no action at the beachhead before 20 February, was down to 45 percent, not counting the 2/7 Queens, which had been reduced to 15 percent during the battle of the caves. Although the enemy's tactics of nibbling away at the left shoulder failed to carry him as far south as the vital lateral road, the drain on the strength of the British divisions was becoming more serious daily.

At the same time that the bitter struggle on the left shoulder of the salient was in progress, the enemy launched attacks in lesser strength against the right shoulder. (Map No. 18.) Late in the afternoon of 20 February enemy infantry attempted to infiltrate the positions of Lt. Col. James M. Churchill's 3d Battalion, 180th Infantry, covering the road leading north from the village of Padiglione, and of Company F, 1st Battalion, 180th Infantry, astride La Ficoccia Creek. Intense concentrations of enemy artillery fire preceded and accompanied the attacks. At noon three tanks of Company H, 1st Armored Regiment, protecting the bridge across Spaccasassi Creek, were damaged by the shelling; in the afternoon the remainder of the company and a platoon of Company I engaged the enemy tanks and infantry attacking the 180th Infantry. A bitter tank battle ensued before the enemy armor was driven off, and the 1st Armored Regiment suffered such heavy losses that the remaining tanks of Companies H and I were consolidated under the control of Company H. To guard the infantry against a possible armored breakthrough, that night engineers, protected by troops of Company L, 180th Infantry, destroyed the bridge over Spaccasassi Creek. Two Germans, captured by the infantry, reported that they had been sent forward with a similar order to blow the vital bridge.

On the morning of 21 February and again late in the afternoon the enemy continued his attacks against the right shoulder of the salient. Dive bombers and a 30-minute concentration of airburst antiaircraft fire preceded the afternoon at-

tack. As on the previous day the infantry action was on a minor scale compared to the bloody battles of 16-19 February, but the artillery fire was the heaviest yet experienced at the beachhead. Occupying an exposed position near the blown bridge, 2d Lt. Walter F. Russell used his M-4 tank as a forward observation post. Pounded by the tank guns and by the accurate artillery fire called for by Lieutenant Russell (who was given a battlefield promotion the next day), the enemy tanks and infantry withdrew at dusk. That night, in an effort to renew the attack on the morning of the 22 February, the enemy assembled a force of approximately four hundred men, including elements of the *1st and 2d Battalions, 1028th Panzer Grenadier Regiment*, the *741st Infantry Regiment*, and the *114th and the Hermann Goering Reconnaissance Battalions*. The variety of units represented and the relatively small size of the total force was proof that the enemy was having trouble finding troops to throw into the battle. The 180th Infantry called for defensive fires which so effectively covered all stream beds and avenues of approach that the enemy withdrew without making contact.

2d Lt. Jack C. Montgomery, a platoon leader of Company I, 180th Infantry, saw to it that not all of the enemy returned. Two hours before daylight he detected troops moving into the no man's land directly in front of his platoon. Armed with a rifle and several grenades Lieutenant Montgomery crawled up a ditch to within a few yards of the nearest enemy position where the Germans had set up four machine guns and a mortar. Then, climbing onto a little knob, he fired his rifle and pelted the surprised Germans with hand grenades until he had killed eight men, and the remaining four in the position had surrendered. After returning with his prisoners and reporting to the artillery the location of a house where he suspected the main enemy force was concentrated, Lieutenant Montgomery picked up a carbine and started back up the shallow ditch. Locating a second position he silenced 2 machine guns, killed at least 3 of the enemy, and took 7 more prisoners. Although

it was now daylight and the open fields offered no concealment, Montgomery refused to relinquish his role of one-man army. As soon as the artillery had finished firing on the house he had spotted as a strong point, he rushed forward and rounded up 21 stunned Germans to bring his total for the morning to 11 dead, 32 prisoners, and an unknown number of wounded. Against resistance of this kind the enemy gained little ground on the sector of the front held by the 180th Infantry. The effort to gnaw away the right shoulder of the salient was given up.

While the attacks on the shoulders of the salient were in progress, General Mackensen proceeded with the regrouping and reinforcement of *Fourteenth Army* units in preparation for a new major drive against the beachhead. Before the attack in the Albano road sector had ground to a standstill, the enemy had committed his reserve divisions, the *26th Panzer* and *29th Panzer Grenadier*, in the areas previously held by the *3d Panzer Grenadier* and *715th Infantry Divisions*. In preparing for the new offensive, the *29th Panzer Grenadier Division* was withdrawn into *Army* reserve, and the *26th Panzer Division* was shifted to the Cisterna front. By the time that the Germans launched their new attack on the 3d Division front on 29 February, the Albano road sector south and west of the Factory was again occupied by the *65th Infantry* and *3d Panzer Grenadier Divisions*, both of which had received replacements and new attachments; the command of *I Parachute Corps* was extended to include these divisions, and its boundary with *LXXVI Panzer Corps* was now situated near the shoulder of the salient southeast of the Factory.

For the new assault, German divisions under the command of *LXXVI Panzer Corps* were arranged as follows, in order from Spaccasassi Creek eastward to the Mussolini Canal: the *114th Light Division*, facing southeast toward Carano, and reinforced by the attachment of the *1028th Panzer Grenadier Regiment* (formerly with the *715th Infantry Division*); the *362d Infantry Division*, a newly organized unit initially engaged in coast-watching near the mouth of the Tiber, which was

filled out with new units transferred from the Adriatic front; the *26th Panzer Division*, in position west of Ponte Rotto; and the *Hermann Goering Panzer Division*, before Cisterna. Units under the command of the *715th Infantry Division* were also located at the eastern end of the front. With the *4th Parachute Division*, which commanded the Moletta River line, *Fourteenth Army* had 9 divisions facing the 5 divisions of VI Corps, and 5 of the German divisions had been concentrated for an assault on the U.S. 3d Division. (Map No. 19.) The enemy divisions were considerably understrength, however, and there was no great disparity in numbers between the opposing Allied and German forces.

The initial objective of the impending German drive was to penetrate the outer beachhead defense positions on a line running from Carano to Isola Bella. Depending on the success of the first day's attack, the enemy then planned to push toward the west branch of the Mussolini Canal—the final Allied beachhead defense line. If the attack developed successfully, *Fourteenth Army* planned to commit the reserve *29th Panzer Grenadier Division* to bolster the assault of the advancing German forces, either on the west flank along Spaccasassi Creek or in a surprise attack against the 3d Division right flank to be launched from east of the main Mussolini Canal.

On the eve of the German attack of 29 February, the forward positions of the 3d Division extended from a point one mile west of Carano to the junction of the west branch with the main Mussolini Canal. The outer defense line was held by the following units, in order from west to east: the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion, with the attached 3d Battalion, 30th Infantry, on the left, occupied the forward line on either side of Carano; the 7th Infantry, the line from Formal del Bove Creek to Ponte Rotto; the 15th Infantry, from Ponte Rotto through Isola Bella to a position just west of Cisterna Creek; and the 504th Parachute Infantry, with the attached 4th Ranger Battalion on the left, from Cisterna Creek to the Mussolini Canal and thence to its junction with the west

branch. Each regiment in the forward line had one or more battalions in reserve, and the bulk of the 30th Infantry was also held in reserve. (Map No. 19.) Because of the relaxation of enemy pressure against the western half of the beachhead front after 25 February, VI Corps had ample reserves to reinforce the 3d Division in case the enemy seriously threatened to break through its positions.

The regrouping of Allied forces after the Germans had been stopped on 20 February was accompanied by a change in the command of VI Corps. The former commander of the 3d Division, General Truscott, who had been named Deputy Commander of VI Corps on 17 February, succeeded General Lucas as Commander of VI Corps on 23 February. General Lucas returned to the United States, where he subsequently became Commanding General of the Fourth Army.

The 3d Division Repulses the Enemy

On the afternoon of 28 February the enemy laid down a smoke screen on the front of the 3d Division to conceal last-minute troop movements. After midnight enemy artillery fire shifted from the British front to the 3d Division sector, paying special attention to the village of Carano. VI Corps, anticipating the attack on the 3d Division, had matched the shift of enemy guns to the east by moving the 27th and 91st Armored Field Artillery Battalions to the vicinity of Conca where they could thicken the fire of the 3d Division artillery. At 0430, Corps and division artillery responded to the enemy fire with an hour-long counter preparation which blasted the enemy front-line positions and assembly areas. For every shell that cratered the muddy ground or struck a farmhouse within the American lines, VI Corps' massive array of guns threw back twenty. The Germans estimated that Allied artillery fired 66,000 rounds of ammunition on 29 February, more than double the number fired on any single day in the big offensive of 16–20 February. Artillery alone could not stop the attack. Just as the first streaks of dawn glinted on the snow-covered peaks of the Lepini Mountains



MAJ. GEN. LUCIAN K. TRUSCOTT
Commanding General, VI Corps
(23 February 1944)

smoke began rolling in on the 3d Division front. A few moments later 3d Division artillery observers were calling frantically for fire missions as one choice target after another presented itself. Striking at half a dozen points along the front, enemy infantry and armor surged forward against the 3d Division defenses. (Map No. 20.)

Of the enemy's initial attacks only the one directed against the sector of the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion achieved any appreciable success. For this attack the enemy assigned the *1028th Panzer Grenadier Regiment* the mission of taking the village of Carano, and elements of the *362d Infantry Division* were to reach the road junction a mile and one-half southeast of Carano. Engineer troops were to assist the assault waves in opening gaps through the outer defenses.

The principal attack struck Company B, 509th Parachute Infantry, which was dug in on a low hill a mile northeast of the village of Carano.

When artillery fire began falling on the company area, 1st Lt. John R. Martin, the company commander, called for counterbattery and defensive fires from the supporting artillery and the 83d Chemical Battalion's 4.2-inch mortars. Enemy shells knocked out the telephone lines to the battalion and all firing had to be done without observation. Before dawn, company outposts spotted the first wave of gray-green troops advancing through the smoke screen. The little group on the hill held its fire, waiting for the enemy to come within range. The smoke was beginning to lift now and the defending troops could see more clearly. Suddenly, as enemy assault engineers, equipped with wire cutters and bangalore torpedoes, began cutting paths through the shell-torn barbed wire, the hill erupted in a sheet of flame. Rifle and machine-gun bullets tore gaps in the advance wave of the attackers. The Germans faltered, then pushed on. Singing and shouting they swarmed up the slope and rushed the positions of the greatly outnumbered paratroopers. When the enemy closed in on the company command post, the executive officer, in the absence of Lieutenant Martin, who was believed to have been wounded, ordered the remnants of the company to withdraw. Only one officer and twenty-two men reached the

battalion's main line of resistance some 700 yards to the rear. The rest of the company was listed as missing in action, though many men were killed in the final hand-to-hand struggle for possession of the hill.

Having broken through the initial beachhead line of resistance the troops of the *1st Battalion, 1028th Panzer Grenadier Regiment*, who led the assault, swung southwest across the open fields lying between Carano Creek and Formal del Bove Creek, which ran through deep ravines leading south toward the west branch of the Mussolini Canal. Advancing on a 1,000-yard skirmish line, the enemy closed in on the paratroopers of Company A who were dug in north of the road below Carano. At 0735, Lt. Col. William P. Yarborough, the battalion commander, tried to get a call through requesting air support. The line to the rear was out. When the 7th Infantry, on the right, sent a platoon of its supporting tanks to assist, muddy fields held them up. It was left to the artillery, the mortars, and the ninety-six men comprising Company A to stop the attack. Division and Corps artillery were now zeroed in on the attacking troops, and the paratroopers' 81-mm. mortar platoon and three 60-mm. mortars located along the Carano road fired with deadly effect,

SMOKE OVER THE FRONT LINES was the prevalent condition during the Anzio campaign as one force or the other prepared for an attack. This picture, taken from a farmhouse observation post, shows the zone of a German attack and obscures the Lepini Mountains beyond.



until the enemy got so close that the mortar men had to reach for their rifles. Under fire from all sides the enemy force stopped short of the road and sought cover in the ditches. It had penetrated 800 yards to the intermediate beachhead line, but the enemy needed to widen his narrow salient if he was to capitalize on his initial success.

Simultaneous enemy attacks to gain ground on the flanks of the salient failed. West of Carano the assault parties of the *2d Battalion, 1028th Panzer Grenadier Regiment*, attacking at 0530, became tangled in the wire in front of Company I, 30th Infantry. Before they could cut their way through, machine-gun fire killed a German officer, and twenty-one of his men surrendered. At 0630 the attack was repeated. Again a German officer was killed and eighteen more of the enemy surrendered. Tank and infantry attacks against Company L, 30th Infantry, were broken up by artillery fire and a platoon of the 751st Tank Battalion. Sgt. William Bolich had concealed his tank in a house where he could cover the road into Carano. While he was observing from the turret, an enemy shell struck the house bringing down part of the stone and masonry wall. Sergeant Bolich was struck in the back by a piece of concrete and a second block damaged the elevating mechanism of the 75-mm. gun so that the muzzle could not be raised. In spite of his injured back, Sergeant Bolich crawled out of the turret and propped up the barrel of the gun sufficiently to allow the gunner to fire. In the course of the day the damaged M-4 knocked out three Mark IV tanks and effectively stopped the armored attack.

East of Carano the troops of the *362d Infantry Division* tried repeatedly but unsuccessfully to deepen and widen the salient that had been won between Carano Creek and Formal del Bove Creek, directing their attacks against the 2d Battalion, 7th Infantry. In each case massed Corps and division artillery fire broke up the infantry drives, while supporting tanks and tank destroyers held off the enemy armor. Mortar fire systematically searched the deep ditches which the enemy used as routes of approach and as protection against the artillery.

During the morning of 29 February the Allied air effort was nullified by heavy clouds and squalls, but beginning at 1500 247 fighter-bombers and 24 light bombers bombed and strafed enemy tanks and infantry close behind the lines. In the attacks on the west flank of the 3d Division front which had begun at daylight, the Germans had gained some ground but were unable to exploit their penetration. Although communication within American units was poor, individual positions remained secure. The danger of a breakthrough on the division left appeared to be over. At 1930 the 2d Battalion, 30th Infantry, and a platoon of Company C, 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion, launched a counterattack to regain the lost ground.

East of the Carano sector, other troops of the *362d Infantry Division* attempted to penetrate between the positions of the 2d and 3d Battalions, 7th Infantry, along the axis of Le Mole Creek. Making use of the dirt roads leading south through the rolling country between the ditches, enemy tanks in groups of three to six supported the infantry. One platoon of Company G was overrun by tanks and Colonel Sherman had to commit elements of the reserve 1st Battalion. Small-scale but bitter fighting raged all along the front as the opposing forces struggled to gain control of strategic farmhouses or knolls. Colonel Sherman's troops held their ground and at the end of the day the *362d Infantry Division* had little to show for its efforts.

Farther to the east the *26th Panzer Division* had better success. Mark IV and Mark VI Tiger tanks attacked the 3d Battalion's right flank west of Ponte Rotto. Striking at noon down the Cisterna-Campomorto road the tanks and armored infantry drove Company L back from a bridge 1,000 yards southwest of Ponte Rotto. Lt. Col. William A. Weitzel, the 3d Battalion commander, sent a platoon of Company I forward to assist Company L, and the advance was checked. Late in the afternoon *nebelwerfer* rockets screamed into the 3d Battalion's positions and smoke covered the area as the *26th Panzer Division* attempted unsuccessfully to exploit its gains. General O'Daniel and

Colonel Sherman immediately took steps to deal with the danger of an armored breakthrough. After dark, engineers were ordered forward to mine and crater the road, tank destroyers and antitank guns were sent up, and artillery and mortar fire was concentrated on the enemy tanks. The 81-mm. mortars, in addition to their role of holding off the enemy infantry, had already accounted for two of the tanks, but so long as the enemy retained control of the captured bridge the threat of renewed attacks remained.

For his attack on the 15th Infantry, which held the ground on both sides of the Conca-Cisterna road, General Mackensen employed elements of the *Hermann Goering Panzer Division*. Before dawn a patrol of forty to fifty men infiltrated to the east of Isola Bella. It managed to get through the barbed wire and mine fields without being detected, and by daylight it was well within the outer beachhead defense line. There it was trapped and during the day the scattered enemy troops were mopped up before they could do any damage. The principal threat came from enemy tanks operating down the roads from Cisterna and Ponte Rotto. The tanks carried personnel for the purpose of clearing the roads of obstacles; otherwise, infantry played only a slight part in the attack. Company G, covering the battered village of Isola Bella, was under tank fire all day. Just before noon one platoon was driven out of its positions and at the end of the day the company was reduced to thirty-eight men with another twenty-five in the attached Company H, although others found their way back during the night. Company F was sent up to assist it and the key position of Isola Bella was held. The enemy's efforts to keep his tanks hidden in smoke only partly succeeded and the destroyers of the 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion had a field day. They knocked out at least seven of the attacking tanks and damaged nine others.

Enemy units under the command of the *715th Infantry Division* also launched diversionary attacks against the right flank of the 3d Division near the Mussolini Canal. In the sector of the 504th Parachute Infantry a composite company made up

of elements drawn from the *715th Engineer Battalion* and the *16th SS-Reichsfuehrer Division* attacked at dawn to capture a bridge across Cisterna Creek. The 4th Ranger Battalion broke up the attack. Farther to the south *Combat Group Schindler*, made up of odds and ends of the *715th Infantry* and *Hermann Goering Panzer Divisions*, attempted to gain a bridgehead across the Mussolini Canal south of the village of Borgo Sabatino. Engineers carrying light foot ladders for use as bridging equipment led the advance. A strong patrol from the 1st Special Service Force laid an ambush in the no man's land on the east side of the canal and when the surprised enemy troops, many of whom were young and inexperienced boys, took refuge in a group of houses, artillery fire was concentrated on them. Thrown into confusion by the shelling, the enemy troops scattered. By midafternoon General Frederick's patrols, whose raids into enemy territory had for days kept their opponents terrorized, rounded up 4 officers and 107 men.

At the end of the first day of his offensive the enemy had hardly dented the 3d Division's outer line of defense. His tactic of attacking on a wide front with infantry units of company and battalion size, probably dictated by the open nature of the terrain and respect for VI Corps superiority in artillery, had broken down against the well-organized positions of the 3d Division troops. His armor, although more successful than the infantry, was hampered by mine fields and the ever-present mud which made it almost impossible to operate off the roads. Employed in small groups, the enemy tanks and self-propelled guns lacked the power necessary to achieve a breakthrough and they made good targets for VI Corps' emplaced tanks and tank destroyers. In the course of the day twenty-one enemy tanks were reported destroyed.

In holding off the enemy attacks the forward battalions of the 3d Division suffered heavy losses. They were forced to commit their reserve companies to back up the line, and individual companies from regimental reserves were drawn upon for local counterattacks. Nevertheless, with the exception of the commitment of the 2d Battalion, 30th

Infantry, to regain the ground lost northeast of Carano, the drain on division and Corps reserves was slight. Since it was estimated that the enemy still had available a considerable reserve of tanks, General Truscott attached to the 3d Division an additional company of tank destroyers and the 3d Battalion, 1st Armored Regiment. Orders also were issued that all roads leading into the beachhead should be cratered and new mine fields laid. With a large air support program promised, the 3d Division faced the second day of the enemy's offensive in a spirit of confidence.

The pattern of the enemy attacks on 1 March followed closely that of the preceding day, but on a reduced scale; their effectiveness was lessened by the vigorous countermeasures which General O'Daniel had taken to strengthen his positions. The counterattack launched by the 2d Battalion, 30th Infantry, late in the afternoon of 29 February, made good progress until the early morning hours of 1 March, when it was held up by enemy troops dug in around a house east of Carano. The battalion stopped to reorganize and then continued the attack at dawn, bypassing the point of resistance and pushing on to reach its objective, the former outpost line of the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion, by 0830. Seventy-six prisoners were taken and an enemy counterattack repulsed during the morning. Before the enemy could launch a large-scale attack early in the afternoon, the battalion had consolidated its positions. Eighteen battalions of artillery were concentrated on the counterattacking enemy troops and their attack broke down. By dawn of 2 March the 30th Infantry had relieved all elements of the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion, which then passed into division reserve. The enemy's hard-won gains on the 3d Division left flank had been erased.

The principal action on 1 March centered around the captured bridge southwest of Ponte Rotto. Efforts made by the 7th Infantry during the night of 29 February–1 March to destroy the enemy tanks at the bridge failed. Bazooka squads were stopped by enemy infantry protecting the bogged-down tanks and when, at General O'Daniel's suggestion,

an attempt was made to illuminate them with flares so that the tank destroyers could fire, pouring rain ruined most of the flares. At 0345 Company K, astride a dirt road northwest of the bridge, was attacked by tanks and infantry. The tanks rolled right into the company lines and blasted the men from their fox holes, virtually annihilating one platoon. As all of their bazookas were out of order the men fought back with Molotov cocktails and sticky grenades. Artillery came to their support and the attack was stopped. At dawn the enemy shifted the emphasis to Company L near the bridge. The steady rain, which kept Allied planes on the ground, likewise hampered the movement of the enemy armor, already hemmed in by road craters and mine fields, and the attacks against the 7th Infantry as well as similar armored and infantry attacks against the 15th Infantry near Isola Bella, failed to gain any ground. General Truscott expressed his satisfaction in the progress of the battle when he told General O'Daniel he was "delighted with the way you have stopped the Boche."

Clear weather on 2 March permitted the Mediterranean Allied Air Force to carry out the extensive air program planned for the preceding day. It was an impressive display of Allied air power. Two hundred forty-one B-24 Liberators and 100 B-17 Fortresses, with 113 P-38 Lightnings and 63 P-47 Thunderbolts providing top cover, dropped thousands of fragmentation bombs on areas around Cisterna, Velletri, and Carroceto. The total of 351 heavy bombers was even greater than that flown on 17 February, the peak day in the air support given to VI Corps during General Mackensen's big drive. An equally impressive force of medium, light, and fighter-bombers concentrated on enemy tanks, gun positions, and assembly areas, particularly along the railroad running through Cisterna and Campo Leone which served the enemy both as a final defense line and an assembly area from which to launch his attacks. The combined effect of the tremendous weight of bombs dropped during the daylight hours of 2 March and night bombing of the roads around Cisterna aided materially in dissuading the enemy from continuing the offensive.

Ground action on 2 March was on a limited scale. West of the Albano road the enemy resumed his tactics of infiltration on the front of the 1 and 56 Divisions and he launched one tank and infantry attack down the road to Isola Bella. In all cases the attacks were beaten off. At Ponte Rotto enemy engineers were busy constructing a bridge across Femminamorta Creek in an effort to salvage tanks which had been damaged or stuck in the mud and to open a way for a continuation of the attack on the 7th Infantry. Colonel Sherman's troops also were trying to get at the German tanks. A knocked out M-4 blocked the road making it impossible to get antitank guns forward. In the morning a bazooka squad managed to get close enough to throw Molotov cocktails at a tank. Three hits from a bazooka bounced off without damaging it and two Molotov cocktails were equally ineffective when they failed to catch fire. After dark the men tried again with more success. One tank was set afire and bazookas scored five hits on a Tiger tank. Artillery and tank destroyers had already disposed of at least four others. The stretch of road between the captured bridge and Ponte Rotto was becoming a graveyard of enemy armor. At Isola Bella enemy tank recovery crews tried to reach a damaged Ferdinand tank destroyer and a Tiger tank. Flares were shot over the area and the 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion saw to it that the damaged vehicles were still there the next morning.

At dawn on 3 March the enemy renewed his attack on the 3d Battalion, 7th Infantry, southwest of Ponte Rotto. Tanks and armored infantry of the *26th Panzer Division* broke through Company L's positions astride the road, forcing a slight withdrawal. Then the battalion held, and in the afternoon the 3d Division switched to the offensive. Colonel Sherman sent Company A, under Captain Athas, and Company B, under Maj. Lloyd B. Ramsey, up the road toward Ponte Rotto to recapture the contested bridge and restore the 7th Infantry's former positions. The division artillery poured smoke shells into the area ahead of the troops before the attack was launched at 1330. Some of the smoke drifted over beyond Ponte Rotto, giving the

15th Infantry the impression that it was the enemy who was preparing to attack. The 15th Infantry expended a lot of ammunition laying down defensive fires across its front until a call to 7th Infantry headquarters clarified the situation. The smoke was thin at first, then it improved and the two companies moved forward. Company B, attacking on the north side of the road, reached its objective northwest of the bridge without difficulty; two platoons of Company A, attacking along and to the south of the road, reached the crater where the engineers had created a road block. There they were met by tank fire and a terrific concentration of artillery. Captain Athas was killed and when the two platoons withdrew to reorganize only thirty men were left. Although the enemy still held the contested bridge, the counterattack served its purpose of stopping the enemy attack. At Isola Bella the 15th Infantry sent one company to regain the ground which had been lost on the first day of the enemy attack. No opposition was encountered and the former positions were reoccupied.

The counterattacks launched by the 3d Division on the afternoon of 3 March marked the end of the enemy's third and last major assault against the Anzio beachhead. It was a costly failure for the Germans. Their losses were heavy, both in personnel and equipment; in five days of fighting, 29 February-4 March, they suffered more than 3,500 battle casualties, and at least 30 of their tanks were destroyed. In this final attack, the Germans had made no further progress in reducing the size of the beachhead; their penetrations in the 3d Division outpost line of defense were almost wiped out by Allied counterattacks. Their units had sustained heavy losses and the lack of adequate replacements rendered the *Fourteenth Army* for the time being incapable of further large-scale offensive action.

The troops of VI Corps were also approaching the point of exhaustion. Six weeks of almost continuous bombing, shelling, and bitter fighting, first to extend the beachhead and then to hold off the enemy attacks, had taken a terrific toll in lives and energy. Fortunately the 3d Division, which bore the brunt of the last enemy offensive, had been given



ENEMY LOSSES in equipment and personnel were high in the attacks of 29 February–3 March. Above: A mine-sweeping detail is clearing the area around destroyed German Mark IV tanks. Below: Prisoners are loaded onto an LCI at Anzio, enroute to a prison camp. Some prisoners were Russians previously captured by the enemy.



an opportunity to prepare for the final German attack. The weeks when the enemy was concentrating his assaults along the axis of the Albano road had been used to absorb and train replacements and to strengthen defenses. As General Mackensen learned to his cost, the beachhead forward line of defense had been developed into a well-integrated and formidable barrier. When the enemy attack lost its momentum, the 3d Division, although weakened, was still capable of sustained fighting and its positions were almost intact.

The situation in the British sector of the beachhead improved as the enemy weakened. The arrival on 2 March of the 9 and 40 Royal Marine Commandos with a total strength of 660 men provided a force of fresh and highly trained troops. Assigned to the 56 Division, the Commandos were employed in raids along the fluid front west of the Albano road. The tactics of guerilla warfare, which the enemy employed so successfully while he retained the initiative, were now turned against him. The situation was further improved when the British 5 Division moved to the beachhead during the second week of March and relieved the weakened 56 Division.

Field Marshal Kesselring sent a message to General Mackensen at 1840 on 1 March ordering that the assault against the 3d Division be halted, and that offensive operations be limited to local counterattacks. *Fourteenth Army* relayed these orders to its subordinate units, and the last major enemy drive against the Anzio beachhead came to an end. The enemy attributed the failure of his final drive to bad weather and to the poor condition of the assaulting troops. Four days of intermittent rain (27 February–1 March) had bogged down enemy armor, and it seemed pointless to continue the costly infantry attacks without armored support. A more important explanation of the enemy failure, in the opinion of the commander of the *Fourteenth Army*, was the inadequate training of units received as reinforcements, the youth and inexperience

of replacements, and the general depletion and exhaustion of the attacking forces after the previous weeks of heavy fighting. At a German High Command conference on 3 March, the enemy decided to abandon, at least for the time being, all plans for further major offensive operations on the Anzio front. On 4 March, *Fourteenth Army* issued an order to its units instructing them to hold their present positions and to develop them defensively as quickly as possible. The German High Command had given official recognition to a situation already apparent to its troops: the enemy efforts to destroy the beachhead had failed.

The enemy had started his offensive in a spirit of confidence and with the determination to make any sacrifice necessary to victory. He had drawn upon his dwindling reserves in northern Italy, France, Yugoslavia, and Germany to build up an effective striking force. Then he attacked. His first drive, designed to pave the way for the breakthrough, was launched with skill and aggressiveness, and he won his objectives. In the period 3–10 February the Campoleone salient was wiped out, and the Factory and Carroceto were taken. He had then massed his forces for the blow which he expected would carry his infantry and armor through to the sea. In the crucial struggle of 16–20 February, the beachhead line of defense bent, but did not break. Although the enemy attempted to continue his offensive and to pour more troops into the battle after 20 February, he was unable to make up his losses or restore the confidence of his troops. His attacks during the last drive launched on 29 February showed both timidity and lack of coordination. The enemy's efforts to win a victory which would bolster flagging morale at home and restore the reputation of the German Army abroad had broken down against the stubborn resistance of the Allied troops holding the Anzio beachhead; they had brought him only a further depletion of his already strained resources in equipment and manpower.